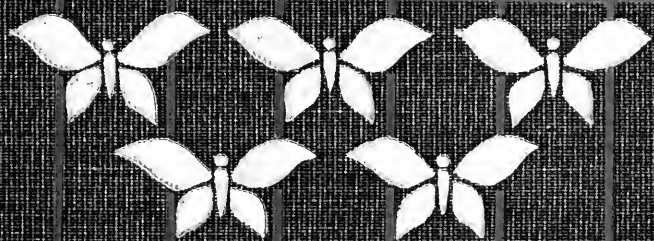


Souls of Passage



Amelia E. Barr

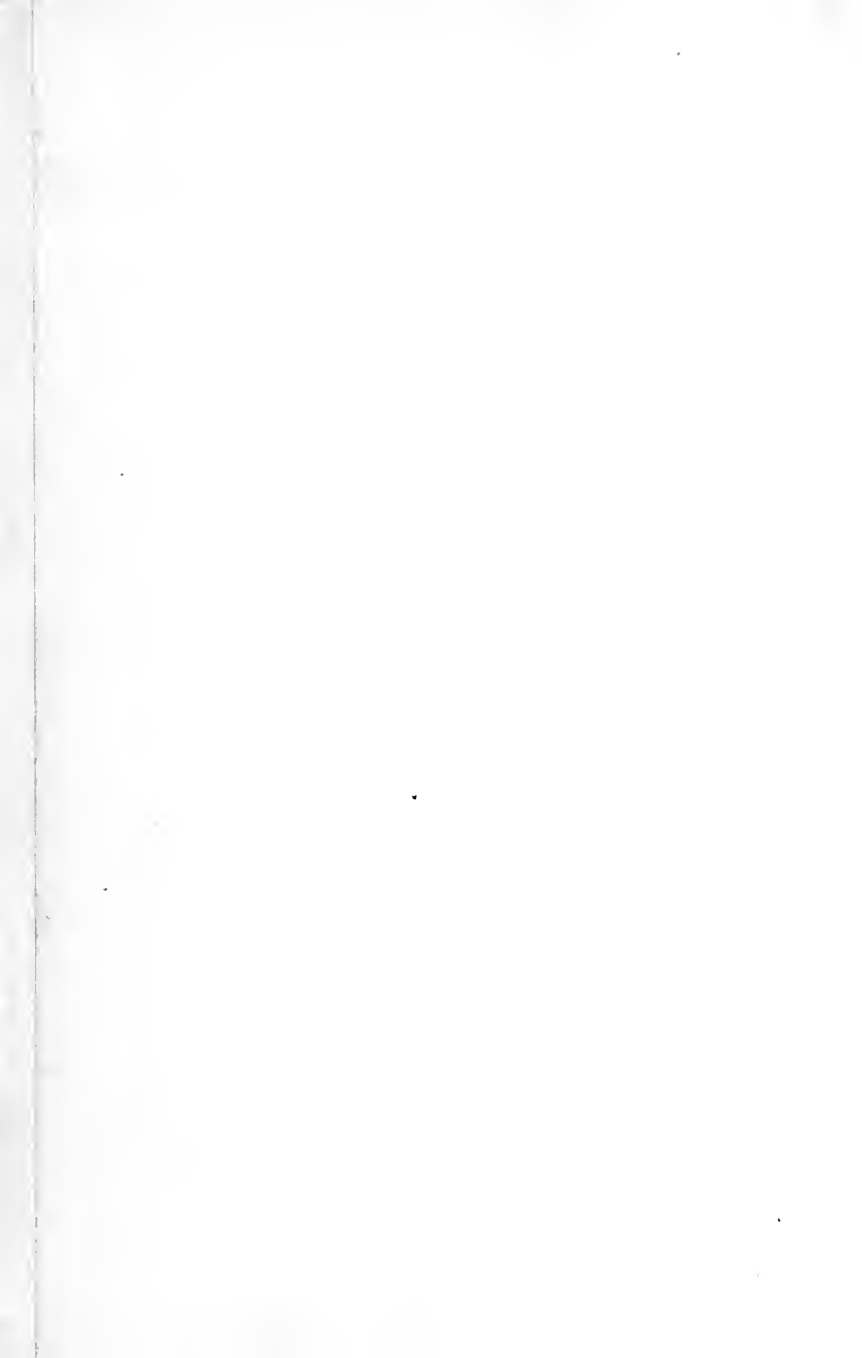




THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

1 of 1
No

39302
~~133~~



Souls of Passage



"LIKE A VISION OF A CENTURY AGO."

SOULS OF PASSAGE

By

AMELIA E. BARR

*Author of "The Bow of Orange Ribbon,"
"I, Thou, and The Other One," "The
Maid of Maiden Lane," etc.*

With Illustrations by

EMLEN McCONNELL



New York

Dodd, Mead & Company

1901

Copyright, 1901,
By DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY.

Copyright, 1900,
By J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY.
(In *Lippincott's Magazine*.)

PS
1072
S72

CONTENTS

CHAPTER.	PAGE.
I. PROVOST ROBERT MACKENZIE.....	I
II. FLORA DUNBRACK.....	20
III. AT DUNBRACK CASTLE.....	35
IV. EUPHAMIA MACRAE.....	71
V. WHO WAS TO BLAME?.....	120
VI. THE INEVITABLE QUESTION.....	147
VII. WHITHER? WHEREFORE?.....	170
VIII. LIKE AS A FATHER PITIETH HIS CHILDREN.....	197
IX. MONEY AND MARRIAGE.....	226
X. EUPHAMIA MAKES A CONFESSION..	256
XI. FAME IS MARRIED.....	280
XII. ALAN AND FLORA.....	302
A LITTLE SEQUEL.....	325

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

" LIKE A VISION OF A CENTURY AGO,"	.	Frontispiece
" SHE BEGAN TO STEP A STATELY MEASURE,"	.	22
" ' AND I WILL NEVER FORGET THAT GOD HIMSELF WAS SENDING YOU,' "	.	98
" THE CEASELESS RAIN SWEPT IN IMPETUOUS BURSTS,"	.	192
" HE WENT TO HER AND PUT HIS HAND ON HER SHOUL- DER,"	.	238
" THEY SANG FROM THE SAME PSALM BOOK,"	.	316

SOULS OF PASSAGE

CHAPTER I.

PROVOST ROBERT MACKENZIE.

EVERY great city has a pronounced individuality, a character which is its own, and which expresses its peculiar life with unmistakable power and eloquence. Manchester is a big market-place; its whole atmosphere is that of money making. Oxford and St. Andrews exhale a stately, scholarly, ecclesiastical element. Edinburgh is an epic in stone; as soon as we enter its precincts, its romance goes to our hearts like wine; and every one who has been in Glasgow feels that this city is the palpable incarnation in gray granite of the Lowland Scotch character—of its theology, its patriotism, and its enterprise.

To this trinity of the religious, commercial, and national spirit Glasgow owes its special character; and in its provost, Robert Mackenzie, these three qualities were well mingled. Certainly on the first day of the week the religious element dominated him; and he then put his provostship behind his

eldership; but for six days, commerce and patriotism had their full dues, and there were also many hours in which the three qualities were so subtly blended that they became one. And in such hours Robert Mackenzie was at his very best.

Personally, he had a strongly marked countenance, a commanding stature, a proud port and an authoritative manner. The inner man in his case had fashioned its bodily semblance with extraordinary power and precision; and as he stood among his bailies glorifying their city and its evident great destiny, they were sure they had done well in selecting him for their leader.

"We have made the river that made the city!" he cried, "and this great Glasgow which we have builded is the monument to our adventurous faith in God and man." And this recognition of the Almighty's right to share in their honor and high emprise was at once unanimously applauded; for though as Glasgow bailies they were proud men, they did not forget that Glasgow was a city of mortals—though doubtless mortals of a very superior order.

Patriotism is not so easily expressed as piety; it requires some hours of health-drinking and song-singing to illustrate properly this national quality; for though the Thistle has worshippers all over the world, nowhere do Scotsmen hail it with such songs of praise, or pour out in its honor

such libations of toddy as in this wonderful city of the Clyde. So that it was growing toward ten o'clock when Provost Mackenzie and his friend Bailie Brodie stepped out of their handsome dining-room into the wet, dirty streets. They were shrouded in yellow vapor, yet still in touch with a sloppy crowd that walked steadily onward without heeding their surroundings.

"There are no loungers in Glasgow city," said the provost with an air of satisfaction; "we have none of our own, and we have nothing to attract them from other places."

"They would get short quarter while you rule St. Mungo's city," answered Brodie; and then his voice became suddenly soft and glad, and he added, "Oh, man Robert, who would have thought of this day, when we two laddies slept together in Maggie Stark's garret?"

"I thought of it, Jamie. It was aye in my head; but for all that I looked for you to be provost at this time; for you are a born favorite, Jamie, and you might have had the city and the ruling of it for a word, if folk had thought you wanted it."

"I was better known and better judged," Brodie answered. "How would I guide a sedurant of proud, stiff-necked bailies? No, no! I leave exaltations and counsellings and rulings to other men. The high hills to the harts, Robert. I love the valleys."

The provost made no answer. Those few words, "*the high hills to the harts*," had suddenly sent him backward to his boyhood. The Glasgow nightmare of iron and coal and fog, of gray houses like tombs, and human beings like phantoms, all vanished away. He saw in their place the old village of Morandaroch in its solitary beauty of sea and land; the high, heathery hills around, and the harts moving over them in a long, swinging trot; and the big stag of a herd lying in the midst of his comrades, his yellow body glistening in the sun. He saw the little lochs set like jewels in the moorlands, and the sounds through which

"by night and day
The great sea water found its way."

He saw the guillemots sailing home in white-breasted pairs; and the little Highland cattle hurrying along the beach, to luxuriate upon the seaweed, and the vision was speechless.

Brodie, however, did not trouble his friend for an answer. He understood that some unusual thought "possessed" him; and he was not a woman to take offence at silence, or to ask troublesome questions concerning it. They spoke no more, and when they reached the handsome house in which Mackenzie dwelt, they parted at the gate with a hand grip which explained nothing, but which satisfied both. Mackenzie had his latch-key

and he entered his home without observation. All was dark and silent, but a little band of light coming from under his chamber door brought a smile to his lips. "Marian is waiting for me at any rate," and with the thought he opened the door, and Marian stood up to meet him. She had a pleasant face, with a fine open-air color in her cheeks; and in her manner and speech the unmistakable local stamp. As a matter of duty she had been reading her Bible, but when her husband entered she closed the book and said with a laugh:

"My certie! provost, but you keep decent hours. Alan was saying it would be midnight ere you got through singing 'Scots Wha Hae' and the like of it."

"Marian, I can keep elder's hours,* if I am provost, and I would be glad if Alan did the same."

"He was home so early to-night that I be to ask him for pure wonderment, 'Is that you, Alan?' and he said, 'As far as I know it's myself, mother.' He is a mortal queer lad whiles. Then he got into a terrivee with his Sister Jessie about the young minister of St. John's, and the way they argued about him was just incredible."

"And he got the better of her doubtless?"

"*Him!* He could as easily have got the better of the Bass Rock. Jessie is not a babe in the Word. She knows all it means, and all that it

*Half past ten.

does not mean. I was fairly moidered between them and just at their merciment."

"What has our Jessie to do with the young minister at St. John's? Is not the minister in her own kirk good enough for her?"

"It seems not. This St. John's minister is a young man fairly burning to show his light to the world. He talks to Jessie about Dr. Chalmers and ragged schools, and all sorts of societies for helping the poor to live without working, and Jessie thinks he is a very apostle. I can see well she is set on marrying him, and advising him, and so forth. As she sits sewing, the very thoughts flit o'er her face and settle round her mouth. Whiles she smiles the least bit of a smile, and then I know well she has made up her mind what the young man ought to do and will have to do. And my thought is that he might as well buy the wedding ring. He is coming here two or three nights every week, and I am not liking him any the better for it."

"Well, Marian," answered the provost, "if Jessie has made up her mind to marry the minister she will take her will, and we may as well learn to thole the man. You know it is not possible to affront a minister. And I can tell you that other folk are as hard set as we are; there is a divinity lad after little Annie Brodie, and as far as I can see the black coats have their fingers in every

one's pie. But, Marian, you may still your heart with this thought—Jessie will do no harm to herself."

"Alan is not liking him at all."

"What has he said against Alan?"

"Nothing very bad. He does not think Alan is orthodox. When Jessie said her brother was a good young man and would be glad to help in the new kirk work, the minister answered with a queer drawing in of his lips, 'No doubt, no doubt; but he *deviates*.' And Alan was fairly mad at the word, and said he was proud of his 'deviations'—mocking the minister and not right to do so, of course—and that it was gey likely he would deviate a little more, and the like of that. And then Jessie laying down the law, and the Gospel, too—but what will you, Robert; for, as the rhyme says:

" 'There's nane exempt from worldly cares,
And few from some domestic jars;
And whiles we're in, and whiles we're out,
Kissing and quarrelling turn about.' "

"That is just the way, Marian."

"And the observe you made about disapproving of a minister is quite true. Forbye, Jessie is thinking heaven and earth of him, and we might disapprove till we were both of us black in the face, and she would only be astonished at our blindness, and maybe put up a bit prayer in our behalf. And

what could we do or say then? A cross word is easily given back, but a word or two of prayer is not always handy."

"You may let Jessie guide herself. She will not go a step out of the way of the godly and the prudent. It is our dear lad Alan I am troubled at my heart for. He is so good and so bad. Whiles he has more divinity than any D.D. in the Glasgow pulpits, and then again you would think the very spirit of doubt and rank impiety had been given dominion over him for a season. He is needing something we cannot give him."

"He is needing no earthly good thing. Why are you troubling yourself about Alan? We'll say he is not all he should be. What of that? I would like you to mention to me a man who is! Every lad that has the world and flesh to fight needs enough of the devil in him to keep the devil out of him."

"Marian, a shadow of the bygone came over me to-night, and I saw as if I was in a *dwam** the Highland hills and the great North Sea; and I am believing that a year up yonder way would be good for the lad. He has too much of the world and of its men and women. It might be a kind of salvation to let him match himself with the men of the mountains and the fishers on the sea; with the harts on the hills and the dumb beasts that

*Trance or second sight.

have a sense of their own, and a very fine sense in its light and way. It is forty years since my dog Brian died at Morandaroch, and this night the very creature himself seemed to be padding at my side. You will be forced to say that love which can keep the grip of you for forty years is worth the having; for I would give a thousand pounds this night to have the honest beast at my elbow."

"Well, provost, Alan can have a dog, or two dogs, right here in Glasgow itself—if you think there is salvation in a dog's love. Keep me, Robert! What are you hawering about? If you had named the love of some good woman I could well believe you—but dogs and the like of them creatures! Perfect nonsense! And I am not for Alan going to the Highlands. Goodness only knows what or who he will foregather with on the mountains and on the water. There's women-folk, too, wherever you send him, and I'm thinking, if you will be honest with yourself and with me, that it is Flora Dunbrack you are feared for; and that you are for sending Alan to the Highlands out of her way—the smatchet!—the saucy little cutty that she is!"

"Whist! whist! wife! There is not a mite of harm in the bonnie creature. She is just a little wild heart, that has had too much of her own way, and so is ill to guide in the way of other

people. Forbye, she does not care a pinhead for Alan Mackenzie. Not her! She is aye measuring him by some soldier or woodsman and finding him totally and altogether wanting."

"It sets her to find Alan Mackenzie wanting! Her! with her bit fortune of three hundred a year! What will she be expecting—a Highland lord or a Lowland earl? I think, provost, we had better be sleeping than talking nonsense at this hour of the night—I might say of the morning."

"I told you, Marian, that I had a kind of dwam or backsight as I was coming home; and it has put sleep far from me, and set some things in such clearness before my soul that all the glory and honor of this day is just as a whiff of smoke."

"It was a great day for you, Robert, and a happy, proud day for me."

"I know that, wife; but when we are on the top-most peaks of joy or prosperity we are often made to feel that their foundation is deep down in some abyss of sorrow or care; and to-night I looked for a moment into one which made my soul tremble, for in it I saw as it were the shadow of our dear Alan."

"Robert! Robert! What are you saying? Now you have sent the sleep far from me, and you be to tell me all you fear and mean. The lad has no outstanding vices that I know of."

"Nor yet any outstanding virtues. I wouldn't

mind the vices if he had the virtues to keep them in check. He is so many-sided and so many-minded. Of Jessie we know everything. All that Jessie might do she does. There is nothing wanting and nothing over. But with Alan there is always something over. You think he has said his say, and that he means what he says, and then at the last he will out with a few words that leaves all uncertain and unfinished—and you don't know where you have him."

"I am sure there are few young men more religious. He is a very Pharisee about the ordinances and the Sabbath day."

"Yes," answered the father wearily. "Alan is of the religious temperament. But he has not a single conviction that could stand a strain. Jessie would go to the stake for her creed without a word. Alan would argue the question until he was uncertain about every creed; and he can persuade most people of most things, and himself of almost anything. I heard him arguing with Matthew Laird about Calvinism the other night at the Thistle. He started out with an extravagant praise of the dogma, of the fine men it had bred, and the great deeds it had done; and when the talk was over Alan's last word was, 'Well, Matthew, if Calvinism is what you say it is I think my opinion ought to have been asked ere I was sent into the world on any such like terms.' You see,

Marian, he had sailed quite round the question, and he went off whistling 'The Laird o' Cockpen.' What will you say to religion of that kind?"

"I say nothing at all. God is love, and I build my faith on that creed. Where do mothers get their love but from Him? and I think, Robert, it would be more wise-like and kind-like in you sometimes to wink as well as to see."

"I see one thing clearly: Alan must have other surroundings, and as soon as I came to this conviction the way was opened wide for him. For a week ago I had a letter from Peter McDuff, of Morandaroch, and he tells me that the old castle of the Dunbracks is for sale, and at a bargain past believing. Colonel MacLeod, of the Indian Service, bought it six years ago, and now he is sick of the place, and wants to go back to the heat and sun of Calcutta. Very well; Dunbrack is only two miles from Morandaroch, and he has made great improvements, and nothing asked for them. I am in a great mind to buy it. McDuff says it is a fine estate going for a song."

"What would you do with an estate in the Highlands? You a Glasgow merchant! Thae proud Highlanders would give you scorn for your friendship."

"I am as good as any of them. If a poor gentleman has to make money in trading, that is not his fault. They will ask whose son I am, and when

they hear I am Roderick Mackenzie's son, they will lift their bonnets to me at once. But I was not thinking of going to Dunbrack. It is to be for you and for the children as a summer home, and I may say that few Glasgow ladies will be able to even you in this respect."

"But it would be a poor estate and a poor house wanting yourself. I would rather bide where I could see you. It is maybe just a habit with me to like your face and your company, but that is my failing, and there is no estate in Highlands or Lowlands that could make up for that pleasure if I had to want it."

"Your words are sweet, Marian, and I am far from seeking to be rid of your face and company. I thought of our poor cousin, Thrift Athole; she will look after the young things, and you need not be too long away at any time. Forbye, I might make occasion to run up there myself now and then."

"My certie! Elder Orr's wife would have to sing her song about Alderswood a key or two lower. If she can write herself 'Mistress Orr, Alderswood House'—I would then be—what would I be, Robert?"

"Mistress Mackenzie, Dunbrack Castle, Morandaroach, Rosshire."

"I would just put the whole of that on my card, provost."

“And Alan would, in a way, own the hills, and the deer, and the birds, and the little bay with the fishing boats coming and going, and the blue lochs where the trout lie hid; and he would be up on the hills, and away on the sea water, and so the smur of the market-place and the spirit of the Glasgow planestones would be blown off his young soul, and I have faith to believe that he would be—in a way—made o’er again.”

“He suits me well as he is. I don’t want him changed. Why would I? God made him, and He knows every slip and fall the lad will have before he walks in the right way without a stumble. I trust him with God.”

“If it was only in matters between him and God, that would be sufficient; but the lad is as slippery and uncertain about business as he is about religion. And that will not do. Men won’t put up with it. His ideas about very important obligations are, to say the least, often loose-ended. I want to see if a different life will make a different man of him, and whether you believe me or not, I will say this—a wife like Flora ’is just what he needs. She is strong where he is weak. She is wise where he is foolish. She is clever where he has not an ounce of common sense.”

“And she has a temper that blazes like a pine knot. Alan with his good nature would be at her merciment. What do you say to that?”

"I say that Alan has his own temper, and a very bad one it is at times. I have seen him neither to hold nor to bind. Patient enough with women, of course, but if there is any kind of temper to be afraid of it is the anger of a patient man. Alan will bear and bear, and then in a moment—just for nothing at all—say or do what no one will bear; and then the mischief and all to pay. Flora has a hot temper, but she has it bitted and bridled, and ever she does give it headway she will be understanding herself the why and the wherefore."

"I would like to know, once for all, what for you are so set up with that lassie? There must be something behind what you have told me, and how do I know but that it is the lassie's mother. I can tell you it is not a thing any woman likes to have a full-grown girl dropped into her home; a girl, too, that has not a thing in common with any one of us. Her thoughts and ways are that outlandish that the ladies who come calling look at her in wonderment; and if the men do go daft about her beauty, I think that is little to her credit."

"I hope, Marian, you will not count it to her blame; for what will you say then about your own beauty, which bothered the men not a little ere you chose me from among the lave of your lovers. And well you know there is no woman behind

Flora; no woman but yourself ever troubled the heart of Robert Mackenzie."

"Then tell me why Colonel Dunbrack sent her to you, as if he had a kind of right to send her—not one 'If you please,' or 'Will you, for the sake of God, take care of my child?' but just, 'Dear Robert, I send you my little girl.' What for did he expect you to take charge of his little girl?"

"I will tell you, Marian. Angus Dunbrack—Flora's father—was for many a year heart of my heart, and soul of my soul. We were constantly together; we hunted and fished together, we read together, we ate and slept together, I think we mostly dreamed the same dreams. Talk of the love of brothers, it was not to be named with our love; and when at last Angus went to the army, I felt as if one half of me had died and gone away forever. Twice over he saved my life; once when I was drowning, and once when I was lost crossing Ben Trodhu. My own kin had given up the search, but Flora's father would not give it up, and at last he found me and my dog Brian starving together. The dog had laid himself down to die with me, his head close to my face, and I remember this moment how he tried to comfort me as long as he had the strength. Well, Angus went to Canada with his regiment, and poor Brian died soon after; but I thank God I was able to sit by him and comfort and help him till I saw his big,

tender eyes grow dark in death. Poor Brian! Now you will be understanding why I would give a thousand pounds to have had him at my elbow this night. For I think he would have known of the glory and honor that had come to me, and been glad of it," and the provost's voice trembled, and he put his hand for a moment before his eyes, for they were full of tears—those ancient tears, whose source is in the youth of memory, and which only something subtle and sudden can surprise.

"You should have spoke of these things before, Robert. I am sorry you were not more trusty with me."

"I am sorry myself, Marian. I will tell you why I did not. When I was twenty-one years old my Uncle Roderick—God rest his soul—gave me the five hundred pounds which was all my father could leave me, and I fancied—maybe it was only fancy—that he thought he had done his full duty and would be glad to be rid of me. So, one day after a few words I did not like, I turned my back on Morandaroch, and I vowed to myself never to let a thought of it come between me and my future. I tried to put it out of my mind, and I never even named my life there to Jamie Brodie, though we have been very close friends from the first day of my Glasgow life. When I asked your hand I told your father that I was of a good Highland family, and he said, 'Let that be; you have a

good name and a good business, and that is more to the point. I am not asking after your forbears, I am asking after yourself.' And as the years went on I forgot Angus, but only in the same way that we forget the dead whom yet we love. I did not speak of him, I did not write to him, but he kept his place in my heart and memory, and no other man has ever, or will ever, take what is his. So when I got those few pitiful lines written on his death-bed, and I knew that he had not forgot me, my heart went out to the child he loved, and for his sake I loved her, and syne for her own sake, for she is well able to win her own love, if only folks will be a little kind and just to her."

"I had been kinder to her if you had been freer with me, Robert. I feel a deal different to the lassie now. For it is not to be denied we owe a big debt of love to her; and though we may pay a debt of siller with siller, a debt of love must be paid in kind or go unblest."

"And you will be remembering, Marian, what the Scriptures say about entertaining strangers."

"I am minding it, provost; but I am not expecting anything so extraordinar as that Flora Dunbrack will turn out to be an angel."

The provost rose with a sigh and went to the window and looked up to the blue lift full of stars. The watch was just calling "Half-past twelve, and a fine, starlight morning," and he listened until

the man's voice was lost in the empty street. Then he said :

"I have had a long day, wife, and the best part of it has been the end of it. There is nothing now between us but love, for I have shared the last thought and fear and hope with you. And I am thankful this night to the Giver of all good gifts that in the height of my prosperity He thought of me, and sent me a back-glimpse of life to sober me, and that I was helped to share with you the care anent our boy, that has been troubling my heart for a long time. My dear Marian! 'I wouldna gie my ain wife for any wife I see.' Now we be to ask His blessing, and then rest in its merciful shadow."

But long after, when all his physical senses were fast shut in deep sleep, the wife, wakeful over many new thoughts, heard the unconscious man murmuring in the far-off, hollow voice of the dreamer :

" On high Benmore green mosses grow,
And heath bells bud in deep Glencoe."

CHAPTER II.

FLORA DUNBRACK.

It was really spring in spite of the showers and the chill wind, for the sunshine was coming into Flora's room as though the sun had risen for her alone. She was sitting in it, singing and sewing, but mostly singing—a lovely little woman, fresh and sweet as a spray of apple blossom on the day of its birth. Lazily her hands drew the thread through the cloth, keeping a kind of time and motion to the haunting melody of an old Border song:

“ Some say that I love young Polmood,
And some say he loves not me;
But I think I'm a match for the best of his blood,
Though I had not a ewe on the Logan Lee.”

She laughed gaily to herself at this assertion, and went over the last two lines without a stitch to keep them company. Then she continued:

“ For wooers I have many braw men,
Booted and spurr'd, as any may see;
All lighting down at the Mossfennan gate,
Down by the side of the Logan Lee.

“Three came east, and three came west,
Three came out from the North Countrie;
The lave all came from the Moffat-side,
All lighting down at the Logan Lee.”

And with the last lines she rose, threw down her sewing, and spreading her little black gown, began to step a stately measure, that had a delightful Old World charm about it. Her eyes danced, her face blushed like a rose, her bright brown hair, falling in a glory around her, seemed to be instinct with radiant life in every single strand. It waved and curled, and fell forward and backward, as if aware of the girl's delight, and she lifted her hands and put it behind her ears, and in her unconscious abandonment to the joy of melodious movement made a picture that was in the highest degree captivating.

When she was weary she sat down and lifted her work again, and began to talk to herself—a very significant thing to do. For this converse is with ourselves, with our inner, real life; and in such communion we may express every feeling without any fear of giving offence, and without any doubt of complete sympathy. So as she put the needle through the linen she said to the woman within her, “What do you think of it, Flora? What is the meaning of it all? I am to call Provost Mackenzie ‘Uncle,’ and Mistress Mackenzie ‘Aunt,’ and Jessie is to be ‘Cousin Jessie,’ and

Alan 'Cousin Alan.' Have I had a fortune left me? Or have there been rulings and counsellings from the pillow? Or is it Alan's doing? Or the minister's? Alan is in love with me, and he does not know it, and I hope he will never find it out; and the big minister—six feet two of divinity, I mean theology—I could not be worthy of so much approval; and I hope he will never express it—men are so queer, and they think girls believe them. Oh!

“ ‘Some say that I love young Polmood,
And some say he loves not me.’ ”

The merry, mocking words were ringing through the room when Jessie Mackenzie opened the door and said:

“Cousin Flora, you sing more Scotch songs than any Scotch girl I know. Where did you learn the 'Logan Lee'?”

“In Canada. I was riding with father one day in the woods near Ontario and we came to a Scotch settlement, and a woman stood in the door of a cabin singing it. There was a spring of water close by, and father said, 'Let us water our horses,' and as they drank he took up the song and sang it with her. And she said, 'Light down, sir—you and the young lady—and have a drink of milk and a mouthful of oat cake, just for the sake of the "Logan Lee."' And we did so; and when



"SHE BEGAN TO STEP A STATELY MEASURE."



father began to talk to her he found she had come from a place called Morandaroch, quite near his own home, and they were Mackenzies. Some of them had known father when he was a boy and a young man. So ever since I love the 'Logan Lee,' for I always smell the pines, and feel the great silence, and hear my father's voice in it. Yes, when I sing the 'Logan Lee' there are more sing it with me than anybody but myself hears."

"You are a queer lassie. What will you think when I tell you that my father has bought Dunbrack Castle, and that we are going there? Your father sold it to Peter McDuff, and he sold it again, seven years ago, to an Indian officer, and now the Indian officer sells it to my father."

"Then I am going home! Going to the old home of the Dunbracks! How strange! How wonderful! I hope my father knows it!"

"It is far from likely, and you should not say such things. The dead will have something else to do than care about the living."

"I think that is what they will like to do best of all—and you know nothing about the dead, Jessie—I mean about *my* dead."

"Neither do you."

"I do not tell everything I know. Do you think my father and my mother forget me? It would be a queer thing if they did. I do not forget them."

"Well, we are going to Dunbrack in two weeks, and you will have this and that to buy, for I dare say there will be no shops convenient. Mother made out a list for you, and she says you had better go to Campbell's and get the things."

"Are you going?"

"Not just yet. I am expecting Mr. Laidlaw about the sewing class."

"And what will Mr. Laidlaw do when Jessie goes away?"

"He will just have to do without her," answered Jessie, smiling; "Effie Gilchrist will slip into my place."

"Oh, what an ungrateful thing to say, Jessie! But I will go to Campbell's and fill this list of pretty things, for who can tell how many braw lovers I may meet with in the Highlands?"

"There are plenty of Mackenzies round Dunbrack, and the Mackenzies are a handsome race. If you should meet Alan on the street, mother says, you are to tell him that his father has heard of the theatre party, and is very angry anent it. She thinks Alan had better be getting his excuses ready."

"As if he needed time for that!" said Flora with some contempt. "He has an excuse on the tip of his tongue for every fault. Have you seen him this morning? And what does he say about Dunbrack?"

"He is delighted. He went out immediately to buy guns and fishing tackle. You would suppose he was going to clear the hills of deer and the streams of trout, but any Highland lad will put him through his facings. Be sure and get a linsey dress for the heather, and high boots, and a hat that will tie well down."

"I will not have linsey—I will have tartan."

"A good dark one, then, like the Black Watch."

"I will have my own tartan. The Dunbracks are kin to the MacLeods, and the MacLeod tartan is good enough."

"Very well; as mother says, you be to have your own way; no other suits you."

"My own way is the right way—for me."

Then she put on her bonnet and cape and went out to do her shopping; but she did not see Alan, nor did any one of his family do so until dinner was over and they were gathered in the drawing-room. His absence had not been spoken of, but it had been felt, and the provost was gloomily pondering it when the young man entered the room. He came in buoyant and eager, and looked exceedingly handsome and persuasive, as his eyes sought the whole company, and smiled upon them in such security of good-will that it was very hard to resist their influence. The brightness of youth glowed in his face, and the light on it came and went like light on water. He had a caressing

voice and a delightful smile, and all who came within his influence were quickly captive to his kindness and charm.

There is, however, in every face a moral aspect and value that is less evident than the physical form, but far more potent and lasting in its judgment, and the moral aspect in Alan Mackenzie's face was not as favorable as the physical one. At first this weakness was not recognized, and the conviction of it was generally forced unwillingly on those who knew him, and who only admitted the fact after repeated experiences of his disappointing way of running into sand before he accomplished what he promised. No matter how well he was loved, sooner or later his friends were forced to acknowledge this mysterious stamp of moral looseness of mind on the physical beauty; and perhaps no earthly feeling but maternal love could determinately and constantly ignore it.

Certainly his mother saw no fault in him, and she was as ready this evening as she had always been to stand by him in all his "deviations," though the theatre was, in her honest belief, a specially wicked one.

"Good-evening all!" said the young man with great good humor; "I am a little late, I fear."

No one spoke for a moment, then Flora answered with equal gaiety of tone, "Good-even-

ing, Alan. We have all been wearying for you. None of us liked to say we wanted to go to the Highlands till we heard from you."

"Alan does not want to go to the Highlands," said the provost. "Why would he be caring for the sea and the mountains? He would rather be among sawdust, and painted women, and lamp oil. Where were you last night, sir? I cannot believe I have heard the very truth anent your doings."

"I was at Glover's Theatre, sir. Mrs. Glover was playing 'The Jealous Wife,' and James Littlejohn and Tom Brodie and myself were of the opinion that it would be a kind of education to see it. We shall all of us be forced into the married state one day or other, and Mrs. Glover gave us an insight into some things last night that will doubtless be very serviceable in our future lives;" and he looked full and smiling into his father's face, for it was well known in the Mackenzie household that the provost had suffered many things in his day from the exacting affection of a suspicious wife.

The provost answered the insinuation in a way Alan did not anticipate. He looked squarely and sternly into the young man's eyes and said, "If that was the knowledge of good and evil you were after, you should have come to me. I could have told you more than all the play actors."

"Provost, what are you saying at all?" cried Mrs. Mackenzie. "I'll not sit and listen to such remarks! Me jealous! My certie! who would I be jealous of? And if I was jealous an orra time I will go bail that I had my own good reasons for it."

"There is no reason in jealousy, Marian; and there is no good in making plays and nonsense out of it. You know well, Alan, that I have forbid you to go to a theatre. I have never denied you anything that was right and manly, but to what is sinful I will not give my consent. Whenever did you see your mother or myself inside the dangerous place?"

"Yet, sir, I rather think you will feel obligated to go there next winter, for Mr. Glover is going to produce the great national drama of 'Rob Roy.' The theatre is to be hung with the famous red and black tartan, and every lady will wear a dress of it, and every gentleman a cravat or breast knot, and our best citizens will be looking for their provost to be present."

"Our best citizens will be doing nothing of the kind. They know well that Robert Mackenzie is no theatre man."

"But this will be an extraordinary occasion, sir. A great national hero like Rob Roy—"

"A great national robber, and cattle lifter, and jail breaker! I will not sanction such a character

by my presence, and I think little of Walter Scott for giving Scotland such a like hero."

"But, sir, the national drama ought to be encouraged. It is the only way to get a pure, patriotic drama."

"The national nonsense! Forbye, it was not the national drama you were seeing last night. It was not even Mrs. Glover's lesson on jealousy. It was a play of William Shakespeare's anent love, and foolish, disobedient love-making, and death and suicide, and the other natural results of such behavior. Do you think I am not knowing what 'Romeo and Juliet' is about? And you will hardly have the effrontery to be calling Shakespeare a national dramatist. Walter Scott and his Rob Roy may be Scotch, but you cannot call Shakespeare Scotch."

"I do not know about that, father. Some of his plays would warrant the presumption. What will you say about Lady Macbeth and the Thane of Cawdor and such like people?"

The provost had a momentary puzzled look at this question, and Mrs. Mackenzie regarded him with an expectation that made him feel uncomfortable. Flora came to the rescue with a ringing laugh, and then Mrs. Mackenzie laughed also, and Jessie ventured to say:

"Effie Gilchrist has been to see 'Romeo and Juliet,' and she thought it highly moral. She said

that after such a lesson she would never, never, never allow any young man to make love to her unless her father approved of him."

"I am sorry to hear that," answered Alan. "For a long time I have been thinking of making love to Effie, and I am very sure the elder does not approve of me. Jessie, I will be obliged if you will signify my intentions to Effie. Just tell her the simple circumstance."

By this time the room was charged with Alan's easy, happy temper, and it was impossible in it to consider grievances and keep up a disapproving conversation. The young man was quickly sensitive to his own influence, and he turned to his father with a countenance alight with affection and respect. "Sir," he said, "I am sorry if I hurt your feelings or principles in going to the theatre. I did not intend that you should know anything about it. I would not purposely grieve you."

"But don't you see, my dear lad, that my ignorance would not mend the matter? It is the principle of the thing—the principle—the principle—the morality of the circumstance! My feelings have nothing to do with the eternal right or wrong of things. Don't look as if there *were* two ways in the matter, Alan. There is not."

"I do not really care a button about the theatre, father. I would rather go to the hills and lochs." And then he put his chair close to Flora, and be-

gan to examine one end of the woollen strip she was knitting. Every one looked at him, and every face wore the same air of speculation—an air which could readily be translated into the question, “Is he in love with her?” Perhaps Flora felt the unspoken interrogatory, for she flushed, and her fingers moved more rapidly, and the near presence of Alan appeared a great embarrassment. The provost broke the uncomfortable pause by saying:

“Next Friday I shall send off the Highlander with the carriage and horses on board, and whatever else you wish to take with you, Marian; the larger part of your trunks had better go by this conveyance.”

The proposal brought on an animated discussion between the father and mother and Jessie, but Alan seemed oblivious of the fact that they were disposing of his belongings as seemed right in their eyes. He was talking to Flora in a confidential way about nothing at all, and she felt annoyed at the unwarranted familiarity of his manner.

“You have dropped a stitch,” he said in a low voice. “Why are you so careless?”

“Why are you counting my stitches?”

“Because I like to do so. Every stitch you take is a fresh charm.”

“See, then, you can have them all,” and she rose

and left the strip of work in his hand. He looked a little foolish; and Jessie with an understanding of the situation said:

"*You* are dropping stitches now, Alan. Come here, Flora, and tell us what you wish to take to Dunbrack. Will it be the piano?"

"No, indeed! I will not be the one to carry Glasgow to the Highlands. Let us be content there with the fiddle and the bagpipes."

"Sit down, my little lassie," said the provost.

"I am sleepy, uncle, and I can give no advice that would be of the least use."

"Well, well, to-morrow, then."

"Ah, sir, in what far country does 'to-morrow' live? There is yet to-night, and I may go back to Canada to-night—I mean in dreams; so I will expect Canada to-night, and think of Dunbrack to-morrow."

She went to her room with these words, and the family without further remark continued their discussion. "I am only an outsider," she thought; "they can do without me;" and as she uncoiled her bright hair she reiterated this supposition, and so continued for a few moments indulging herself in this dangerous luxury of self-pity. Suddenly she heard with an unmistakable clarity her father's voice in the "Logan Lee." For the ears have phantoms as well as the eyes; they hear sounds that are not, and give back the music of memory

without any corporal aid. She sat motionless, listening until the fugitive melody—without sound or words—passed away, growing fainter and fainter, until it was rudely dismissed by a clatter of carriages outside her window.

She rose and looked out. Yes, it was Glasgow and not Canada; she had only been dreaming. With her usual celerity she began to fold her clothing and put her room in that scrupulous order which living in the restricted spaces of camp life had taught her. But she was no longer sleepy; all her senses and feelings were alert and active, and as she moved noiselessly about she remembered many things that for a time had seemed to be forgotten. "Father was intending to bring me back to Scotland, and let me see the home of the Dunbracks—the old gray castle that had cradled them," she thought. I think he said something, too, about buying it—I suppose he did not know McDuff had sold it to that Indian officer. And now, instead of father taking me home, I am going with strangers. I do not like it; I wish I was back in the woods of Canada. I am tired of this life, where ministers and milliners and tailors 'are throned powers and share the general state,' and we pray, and dress, and visit, and shop as if these things were the chief end of man. That is not the opinion of the Shorter Catechism, but it is the answer of our daily lives."

She threw a shawl round her shoulders and sat down, and after some thought began again to talk to herself: "There is Alan. What do I think of Alan? What do I care for Alan? He is in love with me—am I in love with him? No! But can one catch love as they catch a disease—from contact with it? Perhaps. And Alan will doubtless be heir to Dunbrack. If I married him I might go back to our old home. That would please father, but would it please me? I do not know—really, I do not know. When one does not know which road to take it is the part of prudence to stand still. That is what I will do. I will not move an inch to meet Destiny. Let her work her own will. How white and soft my pillow looks! Who can say that life is hard with sleep and dreams to bless it? Dreams! In another hour they will be wandering up the darkened stairs and passing into every sleeping place, busy with their guests. How far we see in dreams! how far we go in dreams! Somebody says our little life is rounded by a sleep—but—but *is it a sleep?*"

CHAPTER III.

AT DUNBRACK CASTLE.

Two weeks after this conversation the provost's family were on board the Clansman bound for Dunbrack Castle. It was a stormy sail round the Mull of Cantyre, but when the Minch was reached there was only a spent swell and hardly a breath to fill the canvas. Then Flora began to look around her. She had never before seen such a mixed company. A noble of high degree was talking to a Free Kirk minister, who was describing the voting at the General Assembly in some heresy case. An English squire, going north to rent a shooting box, was relating to a Stornaway fish-curer how he had killed, last year, the biggest stag in Murshvoe forest. Farmers were talking of prices to manufacturers, and merchants, commercial travellers, and friendly, sociable people of all kinds from the Hebrides made the Clansman a very cheerful, cosmopolitan place.

This human side of the journey was blended while daylight lasted with the most wonderful aspects of nature—wild headlands, rocky harbors,

towering scaurs, and finally the serrated hills of Skye, and farther north the western coast of Ross—a weird wreck of colossal masonry, piled there by the primeval deep which first began the fashioning of these hills. And grimly through the distance loomed the ruins of many an old ghostly castle, girt round with clouds, and standing in strange solitudes, they had in a peculiar degree that haunting charm which belongs to memorable places utterly forgotten. Flora saw everything as it were in the twilight of Ossian and Columba—the very cliffs had that sombre look that pleased the early saints, and girdled these rocky shores with their lonely cells.

Sitting together at night on the deck, with the shadowy land on either side, and the vessel moving steadily on in the darkness, Alan spoke to Jessie and Flora of these sacred haunts of the early missionaries. But Jessie having a fixed intention of marrying a minister so distinctly orthodox as James Laidlaw, did not feel it right to give any enthusiasm to men so distinctly unorthodox. She said there had been saints—and more worth the talking about—in their own day; and with a kind of hushed reverence asked if they would think of evening St. Columba with the like of Dr. Chalmers, the man who had led the Highland host of the saints of the Free Kirk?

Flora knew nothing of this tremendous eccle-

siastical uprising, and she did not answer the inquiry; but Alan took it for a challenge and replied, "Certainly not. There was no comparison. He considered Columba beyond all doubt the greater saint of the two," and then he gave her a rapid sketch of Columba's labors thirteen centuries ago. She said she had read all about them in her guide book, and she supposed most of it was tradition. Was there any adequate proof that the saint had ever really existed? Was he not possibly a kind of religious Ossian?"

"Plenty of proof," answered Alan enthusiastically. "His works are still extant. I have learned his hymns, and I do not know any hymns that can equal them."

"I hope you will allow that King David could write hymns. I am sure that even in heaven David will be glad to remember he wrote 'The Lord is my Shepherd,' and it is not likely that Columba's hymns will stand *that* test," and Jessie looked triumphantly at her brother, and threw her head back to emphasize the argument she believed to be unanswerable.

Alan was not dismayed. He said he knew some hymns of Columba's that angels might desire to make melody to; "for instance," he added, "the hymn written when he journeyed from Tara to this lonely land, where he had no friend or helper but God."

"I am thinking," said Jessie, "that it cannot be an innocent thing even to speak of the writings of the two men together. You must think of this, Alan Mackenzie; David's words are the words of the Lord."

"Very good, Jessie; then I will only say that the hymns of Columba are as fine as any chorus of Sophocles. I suppose there is nothing wrong in that association?"

"We all know David's hymn in the green pastures and by the still waters," said Flora; "suppose you repeat to us Columba's hymn upon the mountains."

"I can say eight or nine lines of it; for I say them always when my soul is cast down or disquieted within me:

" ' Alone on the mountains I need the help of God only ;
This shall shield me better than a guard of six thousand
warriors ;
For not even these could avail me aught
If the hour appointed for my death had come.
The reprobate perish even within the sanctuary,
The elect of God is preserved in the forefront of the
battle.
Let God order my life as it please Him :
Nothing can be taken from it, nothing added to it,
Each man must fulfil his own lot.' "

There was a moment or two of silence when Alan ceased, and Flora looked sympathetically into his face; but Jessie was not impressed. "I do

not think much of that as poetry," she said; "indeed, it is not poetry at all. A minister whom Mr. Laidlaw knows has written a much finer hymn about this coast. I will repeat eight lines of it to prove what I say." Then with a consciousness of her superior taste she continued:

"Have the rocks faith that thus they stand
Unmoved, a grim and silent band?
Have the proud billows thought and life
To feel the glory of the strife?
Thy way, O God, is in the sea;
Thy paths where awful waters be;
Thy spirit thrills the conscious stone;
O Lord, Thy footsteps are not known.' "

"They are excellent lines, Jessie. Did Mr. Laidlaw teach you them?"

"He advised me to learn them. He said I should *feel* them as I sailed along this coast. He was quite right."

"Of course he was quite right. He always is quite right. Still, I shall stand by the old saint. What do you say, Flora?"

"I will let the sea speak for me. Come and lean over the taffrail and listen to it. What does it say, Jessie?"

"Do not be absurd, Flora."

"It is not absurd. Between the day and the dark there is a voice in most things. Listen to it as it breaks against the Clansman: '*Saint*

Co-lum-ba! Saint Co-lum-ba! Saint Co-lum-ba! and as she lifted her head Alan looked at her with eyes as full of love as a cup full of wine. Something from them struck on her heart; she felt their glance from head to feet; but the feeling was mingled with resentment, and she was angry at herself for agreeing with him. Jessie also was annoyed. "We had better go inside," she said. "We are only making a speculation of ourselves, with our poetry and nonsense. People are fairly wondering at us."

But in this little incident there had been a wide step taken to lessen the distance between Alan and Flora, though Flora was far from acknowledging it. Indeed, she told herself that she would not think of Alan at all, and then she ended by thinking of him, and dreaming of him all night long. So that when she met him on the wet deck in the early dawn she was shy and constrained. The steamer was groping her way through swaying curtains of mist, and Alan asked, "What does the sea say this morning, Flora?"

"It is not right to consult an oracle twice in twenty-four hours," she answered crossly. "I should only hear 'Saint Columba' again; and I am tired of the saint. I have heard his name even in my dreams, I think."

"Why do you say 'even in my dreams'? I

should not wonder if dreams are a very important portion of our life."

"Really?"

"Well, we spend nearly one-third of our lives a-dreaming. Is it likely, then, that dreaming is a thing of no consequence? It is written that Columba prayed even in his dreams, and a strange event happened to myself last night, Flora. I dreamed that I loved a beautiful girl very truly; but I had not realized it—until I dreamed that I loved her."

Flora knew that he was making a confession, but she laughed at such a dream lover, and was so clever in keeping space between dreaming and reality that he never found any opportunity to tell her the name of his dream maiden. For this half-confession of love did not astonish Flora; she had anticipated it, and her heart was resolved not to be moved by any persuasion Alan could make. The physical charm of the young man she allowed, and she was vexed that she should be so sensitive to it. "What is it that pleases me when he is present?" she sternly asked herself—his handsome person, his sunny temper, his cleverness, the glance of his kind eyes, the touch of his hand, the smile that I see is for me alone? Very well, but what of his readiness to fall into every temptation that comes his road? What of his

continual folly in lending money? The good provost has a chronic quarrel with him on this subject. What of his rash speculations and his rash extravagances? What of that facile temper that makes him to-day one thing and something else to-morrow? It might be very pleasant to have Alan for a husband—but oh, how much wiser not to have him!”

Perhaps Alan had some withdrawing thoughts also. The rest of the day he devoted himself to his mother, who had suffered much during the first part of the sail, from the grievous prostration of the sea. This morning she was able to come on deck and look at the wonders of the hills and the waters—the tides racing through their narrow ways; the mountains fretted into marvellous presentments of huge cathedral fronts of every age, so that she gazed at them with awe, and drawing Alan close to her whispered, “I think I have seen to-day the temple not made with hands.” And he understood her.

Toward evening they reached the village at which they were to leave the steamer, and they all looked rather gloomily at the broad-bottomed craft which was to convey them to the shore. It was manned by two wild-looking Highlandmen, with bare arms and streaming hair, but they knew their work, and to a wild shout the boat went dancing to the shore on the great waves raised by

the departing Clansman. On the little stone pier a strong wagonette, drawn by a pair of fine horses, was waiting for them; and they struck at once into the woods. The road, however, never left the sea very far; its roar in the basaltic caves still kept them company, till after a rather tiresome drive they came to a village of white slated cottages clustered round a kirk and a manse. Then a mile of steep ascent brought them to Dunbrack Castle. It was not a castle at all in the ordinary sense of the word; it was rather a stone house, built in the form of a square, the main part of which was of great age, and covered with ivy. But from the windows shone fire and candle-light, and at the entrance Cousin Thrift stood with cheerful face and words to greet them.

They were too weary that night to do more than accept the comforts provided, and the examination and arrangement of the house was a pleasant anticipation for the future. No one but Flora had any thoughts beyond or behind the present; but she could not help, nor did she desire to help, thinking of the men and women who had lived and died within these old gray walls. They were her kindred after the flesh, and doubtless mainly her kindred after the spirit. She had for the first time in her life a sense of being at home. With closed eyes and clasped hands she lay awake, recalling all her father had told her of the fierce

Dunbracks, with drawn swords fighting their pilgrimage through this life; and of the beautiful women who had had the far harder pilgrimage of waiting in this lonely place the signal for their release. Her heart was full of the vague, melancholy dreams of memory. She imagined so much, she apprehended so much, she seemed even to recall. It was an experience she accepted without doubt, else it had never been hers; for all spiritual experience proves that the very existence of an invisible world depends upon our personal response to that idea.

So musing she fell into a sweet, deep sleep, and when she awoke in the morning it was as if she were in heaven. The room was flooded with soft sunshine, the mystical-looking pines were gently waving at her window, and the deep mountain thrill of winds and running waters mingled with the solemn murmur of the ocean. Life was so delightful, so full of joy and expectation, she was eager to begin the day. It was a new world she was in, and she threw wide the windows and let the mingled scents of the pine forests and the ocean blow through her room.

When she went downstairs the family were just gathering. Cousin Thrift was bringing in a dish of broiled trout, Mrs. Mackenzie making the coffee, Jessie reading her portion from the "Blavatsky's Treasury," and Alan examining his fish-

ing-rod. But every one had a measure of that clear, sweet sense of living which filled Flora's heart. They ate their food with gladness, and then went eagerly to examine their new home. It was a house full of surprises, of rooms in all kinds of unexpected places. Some were even hid away in the thick walls, and the entrance to others was by a sliding panel or the drawing back of a full-length portrait. But all of them had alike the old, very old, *past* atmosphere of places in which humanity had lived and died for centuries. They were impregnated also with a personality which no one recognized but Flora, but which had for her a singular affinity and correspondence. For old houses do come to have a kind of local human sentient aura; and there is an inherited sympathy between them and the families who for centuries have inhabited them.

The East Indian furniture looked strange and out of place, and even women as little sensitive as Mrs. Mackenzie and Jessie felt its incongruity. But much of it was very handsome, and at that date very uncommon, and there seemed to be no reason for banishing it altogether from the parlors and guest rooms. Flora, however, would have none of it. She went to the great garrets in which the old Dunbrack belongings were stored, and selected from this store some chairs, and tables, and a pretty tent bed, as well as some framed

needlework. There was a great deal of this kind of ornamentation, and one large sampler, the work of a certain Lady Sara Bella Dunbrack, particularly attracted her; for it was full of quaint sayings, and had scraps of verses embroidered on it.

"I will hang it at the foot of my bed, and it shall be a talisman to me, as I dare say it was to Lady Sara Bella," and then Flora went over and over to herself the four lines which had pleased her so much:

"There are four corners to my bed;
There are four angels at my head;
One to watch, and two to pray,
And one to guard me night and day."

"What a beautiful faith you must have had in those lines, to work them so exquisitely, Lady Sara Bella!" she exclaimed. "I have no doubt you believed every word of them. So will I. I will not be one of the foolish virgins who can do without guardian angels." And as if to reward her loving interest, she found in one of the drawers of a case she was having carried to her room a small oil painting of a young woman of great beauty. She was dressed in the fashion of the latter half of the eighteenth century, and in her black hair there was the white rose of Stuart, and where her lace kerchief was knotted there were three white roses resting against her bosom.

"A Jacobite, of course, you lovely creature!" she cried. "I, also, would have been one had I lived with Prince Charlie. Oh, my dear, I will keep you now in the sunshine, and talk to you every day. I wish that I knew your name, for I declare you look as like myself as a beauty can look like an ordinary mortal." Then with her treasure she ran to the room that was to be hers, and carefully removing the dust of generations, she found in quite distinguishable characters "Sara Bella Dunbrack, A.D. 1745." Her interest was redoubled; she tenderly passed the softest lawn over the lovely face, and then smiling down at the picture, kissed it. After a few moments' thought she opened a trunk, and took from it some artificial white roses; then she arranged her hair after the manner of Lady Sara Bella, with the one white rose in the rolled-back tresses, and baring her throat, folded a white veil in the manner of the kerchief, with the three roses lying against the breast.

"Now I am a Jacobite! and, what is very strange, I feel like one. I will go and show Aunt Mackenzie how I have changed myself; and I must take the picture with me, for I really am like it."

She ran down the stairway like a vision of a century ago, and rushed into her aunt's presence. And the words she was going to say died upon

her lips. There was a stranger there, a young man in Highland dress. He was standing with Alan looking at the reel of his fishing-rod, and he stopped in the middle of what he was saying and turned his full gaze on Flora. She stood still, and Mrs. Mackenzie stared at her with wonder, and Jessie with disapproval, and Alan with admiration. The embarrassing silence was followed by an exclamation from Mrs. Mackenzie:

"Keep me, Flora! You perfectly wonderful lassie! What have you been doing to yourself?"

"Look!" she cried, so full of excitement that her very body seemed to think, "look what I have found! It is almost a picture of myself, and I dressed like it to make it more so—I mean, of course, that it is much more beautiful—I mean that I am not beautiful at all—but—"

"Oh," cried Alan, "it is your very image!" Then he looked at his mother, and she said:

"I hope you will excuse the nonsense, sir. Miss Dunbrack means nothing out of the way. Flora, this is our neighbor, Mr. Shaw McDuff, and I dare say he can tell you about the picture. His father bought Dunbrack from your father."

Then Mr. Shaw McDuff bowed and looked at the picture. "It is the likeness of Lady Sara Bella Dunbrack," he said. "She really died for Prince Charles. I will tell you her story some day. And you are exactly like her. Any one can see that."

"Now, Flora, go and make yourself like living folk; it is uncanny to dress for the dead," said Mrs. Mackenzie, and embarrassed and ready to cry with chagrin the girl left the room. No one had felt as she did, and the egoism of youth is so strong that it never asks, "Why should they feel as I do?" There was, indeed, no reason why the Mackenzies should feel any particular interest in the dead lady; and Jessie was much mortified at the invasion of this element into the proper and satisfactory visit which it had in a manner terminated.

For Shaw McDuff left immediately after Flora's dismissal, and Jessie was sure that he had been displeased at the Dunbrack incident. "It is so imprudent," she complained, "to speak of family matters. You never know how people think and feel. The McDuffs may not care for Dunbrack reminiscences. I do wish Flora would act more judiciously. I think Mr. Shaw McDuff was much annoyed."

He was not annoyed at all, but he had been much astonished and charmed; and he thought it best to depart. He felt that as long as life lasted he would not forget that swift entrance of unexpected loveliness. "I can see her face yet," he said to himself after he had walked some distance, "it was like an illumination. I wonder if she is to marry that fellow—he knows no more

about fishing than I do about dressmaking. I must ask my father about this Miss Dunbrack."

He had scarcely made this resolution when he saw his father in an adjoining field. He was turning about sharply on all sides, pointing here and there with his long, thin finger to the ditcher who was taking his orders. Shaw called to him, and he came at once toward him. He was a tall old man with bushy white eyebrows, and under them sharp, surveying eyes in which there was a very artful squint. "Well, Shaw," he said as he thrust his hands into his pockets, "what do you think of our new neighbors?"

"There is nothing unusual about them; they are like the rest of Glasgow bodies. The mother is civil and kindly, the daughter a saint—with a temper, the son a conceited young muff, who thinks he knows all about fishing and shooting, and he may hire the youngest gillie in the clachan to give him lessons. But there was a girl there called Dunbrack that is able to bewitch a man out of his seven senses."

"Dunbrack! Dunbrack! She must be a daughter of Angus Dunbrack, the man who sold the castle to me. Just so; we had some unpleasantness about it—he was a suspicious creature."

Then Shaw told his father the incident of the picture, and described Flora's enthusiasm about

the castle and the people who had lived in it before her.

"Aye, aye, talks of her ancestors—'them that was before me.' Just so; I am knowing that kind of a girl. I am thinking she will be having little else but her ancestors. Angus Dunbrack was a shrewd creature, but he was sent to Canada, and what can a man make in Canada?"

"There are opportunities in all places, father. One might say, What can a man make in Rosshire? But you have not done badly."

"I might have done worse; but it has been a watch and a scuffle. That is not all, though. A fine lad like you can have his pick of the women; and you are not to throw yourself away, whatever. I will be asking some questions about this Dunbrack girl—maybe it was for herself Robert Mackenzie was buying the place. Angus Dunbrack and Robert Mackenzie were chief together when they were laddies—both of them born and bred near here. I shall be asking a few questions, Shaw, before you are committing yourself."

"I am in no hurry for a wife, father. You trouble yourself on that subject beyond all reason."

"There is Euphamia Macrae. You have been thinking of Fame ever since you were as high as my walking stick. I have no objections to Fame."

"But Fame is poor."

"She ought to be rich. Ian Macrae thinks he is living one hundred years ago. I have shown him many times how he could be a rich man, and it was so much good advice thrown away. But if you were Fame's husband you would find the land worth many thousands every year. There is the Macrae forest full of red deer, and the Macrae hills full of grouse, yes, indeed, and ptarmigan also! and where, nearer than Ben Nevis, will you get ptarmigan? Nowhere. Then, one or more shooting boxes could be put up for the purse-proud English to rent. Macrae says they shall not shoot o'er his ground. Perfect nonsense! An English lord or rich brewer going about the hills jingling the sovereigns in his breeches pockets would be a sight and sound we could well thole a few weeks in a year. Yes, indeed, praise God!"

"That also is what I think."

"As it is, the Macraes, rich and poor, take all the deer and all the grouse and all the trout they want, and not a 'thank you' asked for them. Any landlord with a pennyworth of sense would have packed them, bag and baggage, into Nova Scotia long ere this. They lazy crew! They are eating him to the bone, and that he'll find out when it is o'er late to mend it."

"It would take money to build shooting boxes

and send nearly a hundred men and women to Nova Scotia."

"Here is the money. I have spoke these words to him often."

"What did he answer?"

"Not very nice words at all. 'Your money is costing too much, McDuff.' That was what he was saying to me—he is a suspicious creature."

"You have a mortgage on the estate already."

"I have had a mortgage on it for sixteen years. One thousand pounds he borrowed from me, to give his sons a start when they went to India. They was to make great fortunes there, but it has been touch and go for them to pay me my interest."

"And you would lend more on the land?"

"That would I. I would lend three times as much. I am quite safe on the first thousand; it has been paid me in the interest—the lawful interest—nearly twice over. Between us, as man and man, he owes me nothing whatever; between us, as creditor and debtor, he owes me one thousand pounds and half a year's interest on the eleventh day of July next. Now, if you should marry Fame you would soon make her do as you thought right, and her father is at her will and word."

"I do not think that. Macrae has a queer temper; when he has made up his mind to a certain

course not any son of Adam could change him—no, nor daughter either.”

“He is a poorly creature; he can’t live forever.”

Shaw did not answer his father. They had come by this time to the village, and his eyes were fixed upon a figure pushing a little boat into the water. “The devil!” he muttered, in a voice of annoyance, and his father answered with equal anger:

“That is not language for a Christian man to use, and us so near the kirk, too. What will be the matter with you?”

“Excuse me, father. I forgot that I had promised Fame to go on the water with her, and the time is gone by, and she is away by herself; and now she will be angry.”

“It will be no harm that Fame should see and hear tell of another young lady for you to call on.”

“But, father, women think—”

“Women think! Who can tell the thoughts of the inscrutable creatures? But here we are at the manse, and I am going in to see the minister. There are some of the people not satisfied. Rob Assynt is thinking him not sound in the essentials; and John Lochiel says he is not sure on Moses, forbye there is this quarrel about instruments of music in the kirk. Indeed, I have been long hearing a sough of talk, leading up to a serapheme, or melodeon, or the like of it. Mor-

andaroch will stand no such nonsense just to pleasure a few sheep from the Glasgow presbytery, that are here with a gun for two or three months in a year. I would not go after Fame. If she is in a Macrae tantrum, you could not please her; if you should give her the whites of your eyes she would go on flyting. I know the lass."

Peter McDuff went into the manse, and Shaw stood looking at the little boat on the gray water. There was a bright red speck amid the gloom, and he knew it was Fame's red hood; and he knew also just how her handsome face looked under it. He walked to the end of the pier, and in his high-pitched, falsetto voice called to her; but there was no answering movement, and then he was angry, and turned away. And the black look on his face indicated that the McDuff's tantrum might be as ugly an affair as that attributed to the Macraes.

Late in the afternoon the weather changed, and for three days there was a monotonous rain without a gleam of sunshine. Yet amid the gloom the swallows were amicably chattering in the chimneys, and

"The cuckoo bird
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the furthest Hebrides,"

and such a sense of coming joy and beauty that Alan's smiling remark, "It is a dull world,

friends," sounded exactly like, "It is a delightful world, friends." They were three happy days, full to the brim of household interest and home pleasure, and at the end of them Dunbrack Castle was in perfect order, and they were ready to enjoy its many beauties and comforts.

Then there came one of those exquisite days of early summer, that in the Highlands are unwriteable and unspeakable—the birken glades, the whimpering burns, the silent summits of the mountains, and the infinite azure beyond them, the larks jargoning in the fields heavenward, the linnets singing in the hedges; and to the west the blue sea, and the white sea birds, and a ship with all sails spread, sweeping swiftly toward the harbor mouth. Oh, it was sweet to live, and sweeter still to love in such days and in such surroundings! and Alan's heart was full of love.

For the time of the home settling had provided so many little confidences, so many family familiarities, that Flora had shown herself in quite a new light. The feeling that she was "at home" had driven away that air of proud shyness which had so often done her wrong. And in her frank good-nature Alan became his very best self. There had been no explanations, no recognized change, and yet a charming confidence, a half-spoken, quick-glancing, sweetly smiling understanding of each other had taken the place of the restless,

mocking, easily offended intercourse of their previous acquaintance. What had come between them? That divine love which attracts the best in every one, because it gives the best. Their love had received no special care, no tender oversight; on the contrary, it had been rebuffed, and set out in the cold, and wounded, and left to itself, but, like a wild flower, it had grown insensibly and fast. And there is a peculiarity about the flower of love—it shows various in the bud.

“’Twill look a thistle, and ’twill blow a rose.”

This was precisely the case with Flora’s love; no one could have suspected the sweet-natured, affectionate, charming girl that had been hidden behind the proud, withdrawing, self-conscious Flora they had hitherto known. The thistle had blown, and lo! it was a rose. She had practically learned one of the greatest lessons of life—that if she wished to be miserable she must think about herself: what she wanted, what she liked, what people thought of her, what attention they ought to pay her; and that if she wished to be happy, she must think about others: what she could do for them, how many good qualities they had, how large a share of their affection they gave her, and how glad and grateful she ought to be for it.

They were strangely happy days, for they were days of growth in many good ways; not even

Jessie had a look of dissent. Indeed, Jessie was in a state for which mortals generally make great allowances—a state of delicious suspense; yet a suspense full of a sweet assurance and a determinate ending. The Rev. James Laidlaw had formally requested her hand, and she was waiting in the blissful confidence of his love her father's communication on the subject. It came one morning as they were sitting at breakfast, with all the windows open to catch the joy of the woods, and the hills, and the sea. Two letters were given to Jessie, and she opened one with a perceptible tremor, and then the shadow of anxiety grew light, and her fair, still face broke up into smiles, as if there was music in the letter. There was music to her heart. The provost had given his fatherly permission; he was satisfied with his interview with the minister; he wished his daughter all the happiness she anticipated, and sent her a check for five hundred pounds, so that she might order at once such additions to her wardrobe as she desired. When she lifted her eyes from this pleasant epistle she saw her mother looking tearfully at her. She also had had letters from the provost and the minister, and she silently stretched out her hand to her daughter.

"You might speak a word, mother," said Jessie between her smiles and tears, and Mrs. Mackenzie answered the request at once. "Alan,

Flora, I be to tell you that our Jessie is promised to the Rev. Mr. Laidlaw. Her father has signified his consent."

"‘Approval,’ mother, approval was the word used."

"His approval of their marriage, which is to take place next September. So, then, Jessie is now almost a woman in the married state. It is just extraordinary! I was dreaming of her last night, and she was a baby in a little pink calico frock—I remember making that pink frock—and now God keep us all! it will be the wedding gown."

Alan rose and kissed his sister, and Flora snuggled closer to the budding bride, and then the party broke up. They all wanted privately to accustom themselves to this invasion of a new element, and Alan was glad when Shaw McDuff came, and they two could go off to the hills together.

The new element, however, rapidly became a very domineering one. The tables were littered with books and samples from various houses in Glasgow and Edinburgh dealing in those beautiful garments which belong traditionally to brides. And the consultations on these things were endless. Jessie was not the woman to buy in haste and repent at her leisure. "I require to be very careful, mother," she would say, as she balanced

the bits of lawn or satin; "a minister's bride is an object of speculation to the whole kirk. James says in this morning's letter, 'I must be moderate in my niceties and fineries,' people expect that much from a minister's bride."

"But," said Mrs. Mackenzie, "you'll not be forgetting just yet that you are the provost's daughter. I must say I am disappointed about the wedding. I don't like it done in a corner. I had my heart fairly set on a grand ceremony, and all our friends present, and I cannot settle to think of a 'two or three affair.'"

"James does not want to make a show of himself—nor of his wife. He says people will stare at a bride and bridegroom even if they have seen them every day for a twelve months."

"That is a perfectly natural unreasonableness. Most brides and bridegrooms like to be stared at."

"They ought not to like it."

"That is ridic'lous, Jessie."

"James says so."

"And, pray, what way did he find out?"

"His native good sense taught him, as it ought to teach every one."

"To be sure. James Laidlaw is an oracle of sagacity. But for all that, when I see him next, I am going to have a few words with him. He ought to consider your father's position."

"He must, of course, consider his own position;

and I do not think I would argue the point with him. He has made up his mind, and to move him against his convictions is a hopeless thing."

"I do not doubt it—as hopeless as to tie the wind in a bag. Let me see again the satin you have chosen. If it is not to be white satin, do come as near white as you can."

"James disapproves of white satin. I could only wear it once. I would need another satin for a kirk^{*}ing dress,* and James thinks I ought to make one dress do for the two events. James is not rich."

"Is that your notion? Sensible woman! I never wore my wedding gown but once. It is put away in lavender for my golden wedding, if God is so very good to your father and me as to let us grow old together. But you are a very queen of Sheba for wisdom, Jessie, and I am not doubting the judiciousness of Mr. Laidlaw's opinions, not in the least. If you want a prudent, practical man, you must go to what they call the divines for him. I have learned that much lately, Jessie."

These discussions about every purchase, it must be admitted, soon became monotonous and without much interest to any one but the wise woman who conducted them. Alan had other interests. He was living a charmed life of his

*The dress a bride wears to church the first Sabbath after her marriage.

own, a life of delicious reverie, of half-apprehended bliss; a life in which as yet all was as wonderfully lovely and silent as the earth just before the dawning. He was sure Flora loved him; the very words had trembled voicelessly in the air between them, as they had stood with clasped hands in the morning greeting or the night's farewell. Their souls already understood, and he was only watching for the hour—the fortunate hour—in which he might reveal himself in words and find Love waiting for him.

One morning, about three weeks after their settlement at Dunbrack, they were eating a leisurely, cheerful breakfast, when the mail came, bringing Jessie word that the minister would arrive that night on the Clansman. Immediately a sense of unrest and preparation took possession of the house. Jessie finished her coffee hastily and began to make arrangements. Alan was to go to the fishing village and secure the freshest and finest fish. Flora was to cut flowers and fill all the vases anew, and Mrs. Mackenzie said she would go herself to the kitchen, adding, "The Highland cutties there are not knowing the first thing about making 'the sweets' for a dinner table."

As for Jessie she had a multitude of things to look after, both as regarded the rooms and herself; and there was such an uncomfortable, unusual atmosphere pervading the house that Flora

was glad at the early lunch to hear Mrs. Mackenzie proposed going to her room for a rest. Jessie said she would "do the same thing, especially as she had her hair to crimp and a new satin belt to make for her white dress." Alan laughed at all this fuss, and hoped when it was his affair "somebody would turn their house out of the windows for him." In the meantime he said he was going to look at a yacht Shaw McDuff had for sale; not one of his own, he explained; it had been built last summer for Lord Reay, who had since gone to Italy for a year or two, and who wished, therefore, to dispose of it.

"Who told you that tale, Alan?" asked Jessie scornfully.

"Mr. McDuff. I suppose he knows."

"Well, if he made up the story, I suppose he does know. I would not advise you to believe it. If you want a boat—a most unnecessary thing, I must say—but if you do want one, why not ask father to buy it? When father buys a boat he knows what he is buying."

"I know myself what kind of a boat I want, Jessie. It has been in my head for a year or more."

"It might be a good thing if you kept it there, Alan. Anyway, ask father. He knows all about bows and sterns and keels."

"I suppose I have heard him talking yacht,"

said Alan. "He thinks people who do not know about these things must be idiots. Is not that the truth, mother?"

"Well, Alan, I would not say that much. But a yacht is his hobby, and he does think a man who can turn a racing buoy at the shortest is a very superior man. When Mr. Henryson was running for Parliament he got your father's vote just because he luffed his boat cleverly on the top of the boat of the other candidate. It's a fact before divines! Henryson was a Liberal, and your father was never *that*; but he thinks you may judge a man by the way he manages his boat, and not often go far wrong. So if you want a boat, go to your father; he will buy you a proper boat, and I am not thinking much of Mr. Shaw McDuff, anyway."

"Come, mother, we cannot discuss boats this afternoon, and Alan ought to have some consideration."

"Kindly remember, Jessie, that I did not begin the discussion."

"You are sure about the fish, Alan?"

"Sure as I can be."

To this assurance mother and daughter left the room, and Alan lingered a moment to see if Flora was inclined for his company. But the evidences were not encouraging, and he went off to seek Shaw McDuff. Then Flora having watched him

out of sight, turned from the window with a sigh and a pain at her heart. He was thinking more of the boat than of her. She was vexed that he had respected her apparent preoccupation. Why did he not take her sewing out of her hand and ask her to go to the hazel walk?

When this thought came into her mind, it came with an irresistible longing for the green, cool shade of the arching hazel branches. There was a seat at the bottom of the walk, and flowing past it a pretty brook, whose source was high up on the highest hill, and whose end was the ocean, scarcely a mile away. It had a happy song in its heart all the time, and went singing it to the sea. That was the place to go for rest and quiet; and she put her sewing tidily into her work basket and went to the sheltered bench among the hazels. What long, long thoughts are the thoughts of youth! Flora's stretched backward and forward, and for an hour she did not weary of them. She was just going to return to the house when she heard Alan's steps, and in a few minutes he was at her side.

"I could not find McDuff," he said cheerily.

"And so you came to find me. Thank you."

"Flora! Flora! You know you are wronging me. You know that you are the first and the last in my heart, the beginning and the end of love to me."

She smiled faintly, but did not answer.

Then he came closer to her, he took her hand, he kissed it, and she reddened like a rose, but made no other sign.

"Flora, tell me you love me, and keep me all my life at your side; or tell me you do not love me, and never can love me, and I will go away forever. I wonder at myself for bearing this uncertainty so long. I feel at this moment that I can bear it no longer. Do be kind to me. It would be a joy to some girls to keep me in suspense and misery, but not to you, Flora, not to you! Make me the happiest man on earth, or put me with a word out of my misery. Flora, Flora, speak to me!"

She did not speak one word, but she turned her face toward him, and no words can describe what Alan saw in the eyes of the girl who loved him. Full of rapture, he drew her close to his heart and kissed her, and in that sweet embrace both felt what can only be felt once in a lifetime.

Then they began to tell to each other under the hazel branches their tale of love, and they believed it to be something quite new and fresh; something sweeter and stronger than any other lovers had ever experienced; something created specially for them, out of the noblest impulses of their hearts. And with the generous and the magnanimous this is really so; they make love to grow in hearts that love them; they create it from their own store.

After the first amazing sense of bliss had subsided Alan said, "Let us go to mother at once. She will love me twice over for giving her such a darling daughter."

But Flora shook her head positively. "Do you not see, dear Alan, that it is beyond all reason to speak of our love at this time?"

"No, no, no! I see nothing of the kind."

"But it is. Jessie is now in the very noon and pride of her engagement. All her world is at her feet. She is the most important person in it. Think of the handful of letters she gets every morning, and the presents that come by every boat. Not even your mother is of half so much importance in the family as Jessie, and for the next three months, at least, every one's affairs must be subordinated to Jessie's."

"Of course! Jessie is so demanding."

"But Jessie is right. Every girl expects this little importance once in her life. She is like an uncrowned queen without it. Now, it would be very unkind of us to tithe Jessie's pride and happiness in her lover and her nuptials. Suppose we go and tell mother of our engagement; she will give us, perhaps, the largest part of her sympathy, and Jessie will be compelled to share her importance with us. It would be a great unkindness to her to let any one even suspect our betrothal. We must be content with the happiness of our

own hearts; to ask for more at this time would be unkind. Let Jessie and her lover have their full measure of importance. That is what I say, and I will not say anything else, Alan—dear Alan!”

“You are right, Flora. You wonderful little woman! you quite unspeakable little darling! You are always right and kind and wise!” And Flora, smiling gladly at the wild happiness of her lover’s words and expression, said:

“I must now go to the house, Alan. I promised to help Jessie with her hair, and you may find McDuff now. But you must be home in time to go with the wagonette to meet Mr. Laidlaw. We must make Jessie as happy as we can—our turn will come, you know.”

“I will do whatever you desire, Flora—*my* Flora! Just to please me, dear, just to make me the proudest man in the world, say, *My* Alan!” Then they said together the dear personal little word, feeling the while far more deeply than they could express that potent right which draws a woman to the one man in the world for her, and a man to the one woman in the world for him—that right which is the only divine right in the realm of love.

As they were parting Alan said, “Do you remember, Flora, that a few nights ago we were talking of the Highland custom of betrothal, and you said it was the simplest and most poetic form

you had ever heard of? Meet me here to-night at nine o'clock, and we will make that rite together. The dinner will be over then, and Jessie and her lover will be glad of our absence."

"It will be dark."

"It will be nearly light as day. The moon is at the full."

"I will come, Alan. Nine o'clock?"

"Nine o'clock, Flora;" and so with a lingering embrace they parted.

Just at nine o'clock Flora went swiftly down the hazel walk to meet her lover. She had made herself bewitchingly pretty for the occasion, and when she reached the trysting place Alan stood there waiting for her. She looked proudly at the handsome fellow, who drew her close to his heart, whispering, "My Flora!" and with a tender, solemn sense of the meaning of the simple ceremony they were going to perform Alan led her to the little brook, wimpling and glancing in the moonlight. Swift as thought he leaped to the other side, and so clasping hands across the water, they repeated together the promise they had come to make:

"While this water runs to the sea
I will be true to thee.
While yon moon above shall shine
I am thine! only thine!
And while mountains round us stand,
Thine my heart! thine my hand!"

A sweet, hallowing sense of the lovely night was over them, their joy was so great it was near to tears; they sat silent or spoke softly in that sweet, broken patois that love teaches, when the heart acknowledges with a blissful sigh, "I feel more than I can say."

CHAPTER IV.

EUPHAMIA MACRAE.

THE invasion of a distinctly new element into any home is never a pleasant event and often a very tragic one. The minister's advent was very much in the nature of a conqueror come to take possession. He assumed such right in Jessie and such airs of authority about all that concerned her—and as yet Jessie's concerns were very much the concerns of others—that it was often very hard for Mrs. Mackenzie and Alan to endure the interference with their own wishes such supreme selfishness entailed. In these days Shaw McDuff gained a very familiar position in the Mackenzie household, for Alan found the society of a third person a very necessary condition of keeping the peace. Shaw was politic, and he had a large share of the almost unbelievable reverence of the Highlander for the clergy. A man wearing "the cloth," a man with the three magic letters "Rev." before his name could do no wrong in Shaw's eyes; and he was always

distinctly proud to be seen in the company of one.

Shaw was also quite able to converse with the clergy on all the subjects interesting to them. He had every one of the Free Kirk's grievances in his heart, he knew all the doings in the General Assembly, and the weak points in every heresy case. And though he was a good shot, he liked better to talk of theology than of forestry or of fishing. There was, therefore, little wonder that Mr. Laidlaw considered Mr. McDuff a young man of a remarkable intelligence, altogether a superior young man; and still less wonder that Jessie tacitly acknowledged her previous opinion of McDuff to be a misjudgment, and that she atoned for it by a more than usual kind familiarity.

One of the consequences of this change of opinion was that Shaw sold Lord Reay's yacht to Alan. The sale came about in the most natural manner. Mr. Laidlaw thought it a very pretty boat, and he said McDuff appeared to be quite indifferent about disposing of it. Indeed, Shaw so frequently asserted his lack of all personal interest in the sale it was impossible to doubt such distinct disclaimers. He admitted, indeed, that he did have a desire to see his new neighbor take the advantage of a good bargain, "and, perhaps," he added with an air of honest confes-

sion, "I have a little selfish hope of sometimes enjoying a sail in the boat if it belongs to Alan Mackenzie." At any rate, the boat became Alan's, and he was glad to have her as an excuse for getting away from the new member of the household. As it happened, there was at that time a bitter kirk quarrel on hand concerning the use of instrumental music in churches; and the minister and McDuff had an absorbing subject to entertain themselves with, and were, perhaps, as glad to be rid of Alan's boredom as Alan was glad to be rid of their dictatorial ecclesiasticism.

As yet there had been no suspicion of the relationship existing between Flora and Alan. If Alan remained a great deal in the house when the minister and Shaw were walking about the hills or making calls on the village minister, Mrs. Mackenzie easily understood that the Dunbrack parlor might be more agreeable to her son. She did not suspect Flora had anything to do with this new inclination for domestic life; and Jessie was too much interested in her own love affair to be aware of any other, even though that other was in her constant presence. So that this understudy of love and matrimony went on in the house, and in the garden, and down by the brook in the hazel walk, and no one but the servants suspected it; and as they were adoring

allies of these two young people, they were blind and deaf and dumb, and only whispered their surmises among themselves.

One hot day, when the sunshine was crushing, the family sat in listless mood at lunch. McDuff had managed to get his chair next to Flora's, and Alan was in a temper at the circumstance, for the thing happened too frequently to be regarded as an accident. In fact, Shaw's admiration for the charming girl was quite apparent to any one who could see an inch beyond his own interests. And as Alan could find no fault with Flora, he longed to find fault with some one, and so he watched Shaw with that intelligence for motives that dislike readily supplies. But Shaw trifled silently with his salad, and the minister was too much in earnest in disposing of his share to open a conversation. Yet Alan felt that any kind of conversation would do. He was confident of his ability to make it disagreeable, and was not disconcerted when Shaw said slowly:

"You see, Mr. Laidlaw, speaking of your able, luminous explanation to Rob Assynt this morning, Calvinism is the philosophy of the Scotch people; and as for their being mostly democrats, Presbyterianism is naturally democratic. Hence, Rob Assynt, though only a fisher, thinks himself in the kirk, and as one of the elect, the equal of any man. The spirit of divinity is equality."

"It is nothing of the kind!" said Alan. "It is not equality in heaven, where there are distinct orders—archangels and angels, seraphim and cherubim. It is not on earth, where we have archbishops, bishops, and priests."

"Alan!" interrupted Mr. Laidlaw, "we have nothing to do in Scotland with prelatie orders and establishments. In the Scotch Church all ministers are practically equal."

"I beg your pardon, sir; the foundation of Calvinism is inequality, and inequality without individual merit or demerit. It presents us at the very outset with that awful problem of the elect and the non-elect; and what equality is there in that, or what justice either, if men be born unable to keep the commandments, and yet ordained to everlasting perdition for breaking them?" These words he poured out with a rapidity that was not to be contradicted, or even stayed; and then he looked around complacently at the astonishment and displeasure he had aroused. For, after all, if a man wants to be exasperating, there is nothing like a sweeping religious denouncement to compass his ends.

Jessie's lips quivered; she regarded this insult to her creed as an equal one to her lover; she rose to her feet, and was on the point of giving Alan the few words he really deserved when the door was rather hastily opened, and a very

handsome girl stepped into their midst. A swift glance at the company satisfied her; she made a slight courtesy to Mrs. Mackenzie, and said:

"Mrs. Mackenzie, I am Euphania Macrae, *the* Macrae's daughter, only *the* Macrae is now a simple gentleman, called Mr. Ian Macrae."

"You are very welcome, my dear. We have been expecting you before this day."

"I should have come earlier, but I did not think you had got your house in order. Why do you not make my excuse for me, Shaw?" she asked, looking directly at that young man.

"Indeed, I ought to do so," he answered. "It is partly my fault Miss Macrae has delayed her visit. I knew you had so many private interests to attend to, Mrs. Mackenzie."

"*Humm—m!* Afraid of me and this Highland beauty! that was his reason," thought Alan; and indeed he was not far wrong. Shaw had feared Alan, and Alan instantly saw his opportunity for being satisfactorily annoying.

While this short explanation was being made by Shaw, every one in the room had their eyes fixed on the young lady. Her beauty caused a sense of delight and astonishment. It was gypsy-like in its olive skin and the rich carnation color blushing through it. But her eyes were the Highland eyes, brown, soft, and kindly. Altogether, a face to disarm criticism; and she

was received with open heart as a welcome addition to the Dunbrack circle. Before half an hour was over she was at the piano, and singing merrily with Flora and Alan, and even Jessie, "Wha Wouldna Fight for Charlie?" "The Gathering of the Clans," "When the King Comes Hame," and other rattling Jacobite songs.

With this music in his ears Shaw found theological discussion difficult, and Alan's happy voice mingling with Flora's and Fame's roused in his heart the very devil of hatred.

"That insolent fop!" he thought. "I knew how it would be!" Then aloud to Mr. Laidlaw, "Had we not better join the party, sir?"

The minister slowly rose, and they went together to the drawing-room. By this time Fame's fingers were whipping from the ivory keys the delirious music of a Scotch reel, and Flora and Alan were stepping to it; and Mrs. Mackenzie, entering by another door at the same time, spreading her skirts, and taking the old tingling step with bows and laughter. Alan did not suffer the minister's entrance to damp the enthusiasm; the poignant, magical sounds went on to their conclusion; and then suddenly, without a moment's pause, Fame dropped into that very soul of hopeless pathos, "Lochaber No More," and her voice sobbed through the wailing notes till the house was full of their grief

and lamenting. When she ceased there was a dead silence, tears were in every eye, the minister had unconsciously clasped Jessie's hand, Mrs. Mackenzie had covered her face, Alan and Flora stood spellbound beside the singer, and a gardener outside was leaning on his spade, weeping.

"My dear," said Mrs. Mackenzie, breaking the impassioned silence, "you have fairly distracted us all with your bygone sorrows and songs. You are just an incredible little witch with the music. But it is far too hot a day to be gathering the clans for Charlie, and what I say is, run away with Flora to her room for an hour or two, and talk of Queen Victoria and your own weddings."

"I cannot stay longer now," said Fame with a sudden shyness. "My father will be wearying for me."

"Then he will just have to thole his weariness, for I will not take a nay-say from you." So the two girls went away together, and Jessie and her mother followed, and the three men were left standing in the suddenly still parlor.

"I never heard such music in my life," said Alan. "It tingles in my heart and brain yet."

"The young lady has a great capacity," said the minister. "I wish I had asked her to sing 'The Land o' the Leal.'"

"She is a natural musician, the songs are in

her heart," added Shaw. "If you could believe her father, he would tell you she brought them with her; that her skill is something her soul remembers of old."

"Oh," replied the minister, "the absurd theory of reincarnation, the old heresy of Origen!"

"Much older than Origen, sir. It was a hoary theory in his day."

"Let us go to the sea!" cried Alan. "We shall be sure to find a breeze there."

Shaw looked at him with undisguised contempt. "Who is to manage the boat?" he asked.

"Earne Macrae is on her. Is there a better boatman? And I suppose we are none of us blockheads; but if you are afraid, Shaw—"

"Afraid! What of? Even if you coup the boat, I can swim. And you never take the Lapwing far from land. She just ripples the shadows of the hills—that is all her sailing."

"I take her as far as it pleases myself. Will you go, James?" he asked, turning to the minister.

"Not this afternoon. I have a few ideas to jot down—some other time—some other time."

"I wish my father was here," said Alan; "he would show the lot of us how to sail a boat—yes, indeed, he would show the whole country side."

"*That* would be a sight indeed!" answered

Shaw. "A Glasgow merchant outsailing a Highland boatman!"

"Provost Mackenzie is a Highland gentleman as well as a Glasgow merchant, and he is as proud of one name as the other; and I will say it again, and maintain it, that my father can sail a boat where no man here would venture. I have seen him when the seas were any size you like outside the Cantyre land."

"If I was you, Alan, I would write a book about it," said Shaw.

"I would rather be learning how to do it," he answered.

"Come, come," said the minister, "we shall all be better of a little rest. That music has set our nerves quivering; the room is full of the martial spirit and of the sorrow that comes after it. I feel that I need to go into solitude and compose myself."

Then Shaw took his hat, and no one said they would expect him to dinner. He reflected on this omission as he walked home through the heat, and in his jealous mood was sure it was a purposed omission. Alan would have the company of Flora and Fame all the evening, and he could not endure to think of it; moreover, some one would have to take Fame home after dinner, and, of course, it would be Alan. It was bad enough that Alan should have such constant

opportunities with Flora, but to have him also interfering with a girl whom he had been accustomed to appropriate entirely was something not to be borne.

In the meantime Flora and Fame were enjoying the first sweet emotions of a real girlish friendship. Neither of them had ever had this luxury before, and both were sure there was something marvellous in their meeting and in their attraction for each other. "But we are both in a manner wild girls," said Flora. "We have neither of us been in what is called society. You have grown up among the Highland hills with your father for a companion, and I grew up in the Canadian woods with my father for a companion. Is it not strange that we should meet here, and that we should like each other at first sight?"

"No," replied Fame. "Father says such meetings are generally appointed, and when things are fated some one must speak the word or do the deed that brings them to pass."

"I wonder how you learned to play as you do. No one ever played in that way to me before; yet it was real music; it was, as Aunt Mackenzie said, "playing on the heart strings."

"I do not think I learned so much as I remembered," answered Fame. "Many times when people have been explaining things to me I have

kept saying to myself, 'Oh, yes, I know! I know!' My teachers all considered me not teachable, but somehow I learned—or remembered. Many things in this way come to me. I can tell the time without a clock. I can tell the fishers where the herring school lies. I know when it is going to rain before the glass knows it. I know when danger of any kind is near. I have even a dim consciousness that I have met you in dreamland and exchanged a word with you in passing. You are not quite strange to me."

Then they spoke of Jessie and the minister, and the approaching bridal, and the rich people who would soon begin to come to their houses on the hills, and the shooting and dancing and sailing, and the long, long winters; but they never named either Shaw McDuff or Alan Mackenzie. Yet Shaw was certain he was being criticised and talked over and, perhaps, ridiculed. Alan had no such torment. His surety was in Flora. She would neither say ill of him nor listen to it; but he did wonder what the private opinion of the girls was about Shaw, and he felt that it would be a pleasant thing to hear that Fame had a good opinion of himself.

When they met at the dinner table it was with a general air of intimacy, free, frank, affable, and conversant. Alan had been an hour on the

water, and was full of the peculiarities of his boatman, Earne Macrae, "a most extraordinary man," he said; "a poet as well as a sailor. I wonder if he knows it?"

"He must do so," replied Fame, "for his songs are sung by all the boatmen round. What one was he singing for you, Mr. Mackenzie?"

"He was not singing at all, but he was constantly saying things that were very much like poetry. When the wind rose he turned the boat homeward, because with that wind the sea 'was mischievous,' and then he looked reprovingly around and added, 'It is always hungry for men; if you will be noticing the white horses racing here in the high winds, you will be seeing also the long graves it makes for them.' Is not that poetry?"

"Of a kind," she answered. "Earne is a man by himself. My father is loving Earne, and plenty of trouble he has in helping Earne out of trouble. Earne will shoot too near the McDuff land, and it is one warrant after another Peter McDuff has out for him; and the birds still going where they should not go, and not seldom in the season a young stag or two."

"But," said Alan, "Earne should not touch game; he has no right to shoot—that is wrong, of course."

"Of course, Mr. Mackenzie, no one is denying

that. But Earne has the right to shoot anything he wants on the Macrae land; and if McDuff's stags and birds will trespass on the Macrae heather, is Earne to blame? My father is a magistrate, and he says 'no.' "

"And what does Mr. McDuff say?"

"That is another matter. Really, Earne does not know nor care who is owning the beasts and birds. He is a savage about the game laws, and respects them about as much as the blackbirds respect your fruit. It is as ridiculous to punish Earne as it would be to punish the blackbirds."

"You are wrong there, Miss Macrae," said the minister. "The transgressor must be taught by punishment what is right and what is wrong. If he is not punished here, he will be hereafter."

"For killing the game on the hills Earne does not fear any punishment hereafter. He says, 'The Merciful One is not giving man, made in His own image, to Satan, and not supposable He ever will do so,' and the like of that talk. You should listen to him for an hour—it might set you thinking—it often does me."

"I expected Mr. McDuff would be here to dinner," said the minister, ignoring Fame's advice, and evidently determined to change the subject.

"I was so excited with the music I forgot to

ask him," said Mrs. Mackenzie, "and Jessie forgot likewise."

"I do not think he would have come to-night," said Fame, "because they are voting about the organ, and he will be in the kirk, no doubt."

"Dear me, I should have liked to be present myself!" said Mr. Laidlaw regretfully. "The question of vocal praise being aided by an organ in the kirk service is, I consider, an important one. I incline to favor it."

"I cannot see any harm in it," said Jessie.

"No more harm than there is in the precentor's pitch-pipe," said Mrs. Mackenzie.

"The bitter party feeling aroused by such a trifling discussion is absurd," said Alan. "You might think the people in the village were disputing about a great war, instead of a 'kist full of whistles.'"

"Or," continued Fame, "that the Pope himself was hid somewhere in an organ. Such a storm for nothing at all is perfect nonsense."

"My dear Miss Macrae, we must pay respect to the prejudices of good Christians. I have it to do myself," said the minister. "One of my elders, a most estimable man, objects even to the singing of paraphrases. He will stop a friend outside the kirk, and say, 'We can wait a bit; they are singing, and it's just a paraphrase.'"

But I should like to walk down to the kirk myself after dinner. Will you go with me, Jessie?"

Jessie was delighted to go, and Alan instantly proposed that Flora and himself should walk home with Fame. "It will be a pleasant party," he said; and as the proposal was enthusiastically received, there was a little hurrying of the meal to make an early start. The minister and Jessie led the way, Alan with Flora and Fame followed and very soon did not follow, but lingered and stopped to argue a point, and so obviously wished to be left that they had no reason to complain of the circumstance when it really did occur. After all, it was sweet to linger. The summer night was full of stars, and gradually the holy silence of the gloaming touched them to something deeper and sweeter than laughter. Very soon they were in the great wood, through which a road had been made to the village; and the trees began to press them closer, and they were sensitive to something in this temple of nature—something vast and nameless—something superhuman or antihuman, that was quite inexplicable.

"What is it?" asked Alan, when they had all fallen suddenly silent. "What is it, this holy horror of the forest? Even at midday I feel it; an obscure religious dread, a singular awe of

the spirit. Are the woods enchanted? What is it?"

"And if there was a thin spectre of moonlight gliding between the branches, how much more awesome would be the influence!" said Flora. "I have noticed this effect in the Canadian woods. What is it? Enchantment?"

"Suppose," answered Fame, "suppose that we have among our forefathers some old druid, and that just a drop of his heart's blood is in our veins; might not the holy horror of the forest be still alive in our spirits, even after two thousand years? I am sure it might."

"It is the very feeling that Wordsworth expresses. Do you remember, Flora? We were reading it together not long ago:

" 'A weight of ages did at once descend
Upon my heart; no thought embodied, no
Distinct remembrances, but weight and power,
Power, growing under weight.' "

No doubt Fame is right, and the present is haunted by the past."

"There is another inherited terror, that about snakes," said Flora. "A child that has never heard of or seen a snake, when he first sees one is immediately conscious of an antipathy and fear that seems unreasonable. I have seen instances of this very often."

"It is the same feeling," said Alan; "only the trees are full of beauty, and a snake is the sum of all ugliness."

"There are handsome snakes, Alan."

"No, Flora, there are not; even their beauty is hideous to us. We hate their bare, spotted, clouded nakedness; it is too like a dusty, sordid, soiled humanity."

"Why are we talking of such things in this heavenly place?" asked Flora. "Why, indeed?" added Fame. "As for me," she said, "I love trees, they are almost human; they sleep and they feel; they know when storms are coming, and how they do *tew* and fight and wrestle with a tempest! It is even said they know when their owner is going to die. Always before one of the Assynts die, some great tree near the castle falls. And who likes to cut down a yew tree or an elder tree? Will you believe that I saw Alister Macrae bare his head and implore an elder tree to forgive him for having to cut it down? Yet he is a staunch Calvinist."

"I do not wonder," said Flora; "whatever seems to suffer seems to have a soul. And, perhaps, the druid drop was in his heart also. As for me, I feel glad and sorry with trees, and I cannot help it. In the Canada woods, when I first heard the birds in spring I not only knew, I *felt*, how glad the trees were to hear the singing

in their branches again. And I used to imagine that they sighed for the sorrows of the nests built in their branches. What would men and women become if there were no gardens and no woods?"

"Yet," answered Alan, "the minister will tell us that all our sins and sorrows came from a garden and a tree."

"Do you believe all the ministers say?" asked Fame in a voice at once tentative and assertive. "I should like to ask Mr. Laidlaw a few questions; or, rather, I would like father to ask them. I would not have the presumption."

"As to what, Miss Macrae?"

"As to the very foundations of his creed, thus: Did Adam know of the fall of the angels? Can you not see how that knowledge might, could, or should have influenced him? What a discussion there is in it! Then, again, did Adam know what death was? Did he believe in it until Abel died? And did predestination take place only after the Fall, or was it influencing the angels prior to man's disobedience? I have heard father and Colonel MacLeod talk about these things often, and I wonder what the minister would say? And, please, do not call me 'Miss Macrae'; I do not know myself by that name. We have quite lost our companions."

"They will not regret it," said Flora. "Jessie

will ask us why we did not keep up with them, and the minister will not by the movement of an eyelash suffer it to be known that he was conscious of our neglect. After all, he is a faithful soul. There is a great deal in James Laidlaw to respect; and he is, at least, a refined, thoroughbred ecclesiastic, self-willed and self-confident; but, then, Jessie is liking that—and every other thing about him.”

After this manner they talked until they passed out of the wood and the dim vision of the ocean burst upon them, and its fresh breeze blew far off the sensitive seriousness which the shadows peopling the wood had invoked. “Listen to the waves,” cried Fame. “What a lively cadence they make as they run after each other on the beach! And see, yonder is my home! Father has put a light in the window for me. It is a gloomy-looking place even in the sunshine; but we are not gloomy at all, father makes every place pleasant. I can see him coming down the garden to meet me. Now he is at the gate.” Then all were silent.

In a few minutes they reached the gate, and Ian Macrae stood with it open in his hand. “Come in, all of you. I am glad to see you, Miss Dunbrack, and I am glad to see you, Mr. Macenzie. I was knowing your father when he was your age; yes, indeed, when he was only as wild

a school laddie as you could catch on the hills or on the water. And you have been keeping my little girl, and thank you for your kindness"—and he drew his little girl within his arm and looked fondly at her.

"It is late, Mr. Macrae," said Flora, "and we will call to-morrow."

"No, no. You must not come to my threshold and turn back from it until you have stood on my hearth. Come in one five minutes, and let me look at you in your faces."

So they went in, and he poured out wine and milk, and said, "Now drink, for there is more love between us than this day tells of." And as they drank and broke an oaten cake with him he watched Alan and Flora with eyes sad and pale, as if he looked at them from some depth of antiquity. His face was of that noble type which age makes nobler; and he had that natural dignity of manner which underlies the highest courtesy, and which, united with the gentleness, indulgent love, and wisdom of old age, is a far finer thing than the fantastic glamour and extravagant hopes of youth.

"I hear, Mr. Mackenzie, that you have a boat. Sometimes I should like to be taking a sail with you."

"That will be a delightful thing for me, Macrae," answered Alan,

"And for me," said Flora, "for I will go with you."

"And for me," added Fame, "for I will not be left behind."

"Now, we will say 'good-night,' and to-morrow I will be watching for you—I and Fame."

"I am afraid we have kept you from sleep, sir," said Alan as he walked with Macrae to the open gate.

"No, you have not. The day is for the body, the night is for the soul. In the night-time my soul wakes, and I wake to talk with it. I was going to write you a letter about a poor man that I care for. He is in trouble again, and this time it is not easy to see a way out for him. It is Earne Macrae. I am fearing you will have to look for another man on the Lapwing."

"What is the matter?"

"The matter is this: he is hating the McDuffs, and he will not stop hating them—how can he stop hating them when the hate is in his blood?—and he has been cutting some of their herring nets, and that is a thing in this part of the country very ill thought of. 'And why were you doing it, Earne?' I asked; and he said only, 'Because of the McDuffs. I am hating them.'"

And Alan smiled, and asked what the punishment would be; and Macrae said, "A very hard

punishment for Earne, for he has not a shilling, and it will be as much as twenty pounds to pay; and as there is no money, then the prison and the hard work—and Earne is liking neither—indeed, the prison is always making of him a wild animal—he is not to hold nor to bind.”

“When is the trial?”

“To-morrow at eleven o’clock.”

“I will be there,” said Alan. “You say twenty pounds?”

“It will not be more.”

“Can it be proved that Earne cut the nets?”

“At first Earne said he did not cut the nets, then he said he wished he had cut them, and then he said he did cut them. I am suspicious whether he cut them at all; but he is hating the McDuffs, and he is wanting them to know he hates them, and not caring much by what way they find it out.”

“I will see Earne very early in the morning. He is on the boat?”

“Yes. His uncle was his surety for to-morrow.”

“I wonder that he did not tell me about it,” said Alan.

“No wonder at all. He would be putting off to-morrow till to-morrow came. That is Earne’s way.”

Then Flora and Alan turned homeward, and

their walk back to the castle was indeed a walk through an enchanted wood. Lovers have had such walks before, and lovers will have them evermore; and yet each such communion has its individuality, and belongs of special right only to one pair. They did not hurry, but they were at the castle and eating curds and cream when Jessie and the minister followed them. They also had had their walk into Love Land, and Jessie's cheeks were the color of a rose, and her eyes full of light; while the minister was almost boyishly gay and satisfied.

"How went the organ fight?" asked Alan as soon as they appeared.

"Morandaroch has got its kirk organ by a majority of one," said Mr. Laidlaw. Then he described the voting and the dissenting, and the chatter went on merrily about this and that until Alan spoke of poor Earne's dilemma, and asked the minister if he would "like to see the trial in the morning."

"No," he answered, his face becoming serious and even gloomy. "As a Scotsman, Alan, I cannot help feeling anger at this turning of the Highlands into a great hunting-ground for rich Englishmen. A Perth farmer whom I met on the Clansman told me that you might walk from the south of Perthshire to the seaboard of Rosshire on forest ground, and that from Deeside

to Speyside a hundred miles at a stretch you would meet nothing but deer. He said that from three to five thousand deer and even more than that number were often in a forest, and I do not think such things are to Scotland's honor and welfare. I would rather see sheep and shepherds than deer and gamekeepers. And of course it is hard to make the poor Highland man, who has for centuries had the game on the hills, feel that he must not touch it."

"This time it is not the game, it is the fishing nets."

"But the game is at the bottom of it. Shaw was telling me the trouble they had had with Earne on this subject. And it is for this he is hating the McDuffs. I cannot go and see Earne punished; my sympathy is with him." Then they fell into an argument about the preservation of game, and continued it with some anger until Cousin Thrift reminded them "the clock had struck twelve, and the lasses were worn out for their sleep."

In the morning Alan had made up his mind not to go to the trial. There were some business transactions between him and Shaw McDuff which required at least the semblance of friendship for their arrangement, and it seemed best not to rouse any bitter feeling while they were pending. So he went instead to the boat, where

he found Earne picking a herring and drinking a mug full of hot, sweet tea. He looked happy and unconcerned, and lifted a face lit with admiration and love to his master's.

"Good-morning, Earne!"

"Good-morning to yourself, sir!"

"Have you forgotten the trial about the nets, Earne?"

"I have not forgotten it, sir. But it will not be for more than two hours as yet. My cousin will be minding the boat when I am leaving her. I was not forgetting the boat, sir."

"The Macrae told me last night, Earne, that he did not see how you were to escape punishment this time. Why did you cut McDuff's nets?"

"I am hating the McDuffs, from the beginning to the end. My dirk was in a temper at them that day, and it was a very good thing for McDuff I was coming across the nets, and not himself."

"Peter lays the damage at twenty pounds."

"I wish it had been more than that."

"But you will have it to pay."

"That is the law. It is a bad law, but I was not making it."

"Macrae says that if you cannot pay the money you will have to go to prison."

"I cannot go to prison—not at all. I am not

able to sleep with four walls round me. I want the heather and all Ben Macrae, or else the boat and the North Minch. I will not be going to prison; moreover, here is the boat."

"And I am not going to let McDuff send you to prison for twenty pounds. Here is the money in one-pound bills, and when you hear what is to pay, pay it."

The poor lad with his wild, handsome face and tangled hair looked at Alan with indescribable emotion. For some moments he was unable to speak, then he dropped upon his knees and kissed the hand that held out to him the price of his freedom.

"It is the mercy of God!" he sobbed—"it is His mercy! He was knowing about poor Earne, and pitying him. For I was telling Him all about the McDuffs last night, and I was sure He would be sending me some help. Yes, I was saying to myself since the day broke, The help will come, for the help was promised; there was a word to me last night, and I was knowing what it meant. So I was waiting. And I will never forget that God Himself was sending you; and I will never forget you, and I will be paying this kindness back, some way or other; living or dead, I will be paying it back; living or dead, I will be paying it back; that is my promise."

Then Alan sent him with his Cousin Luthe

to the office of the magistrate, and he himself remained on the boat. He had plenty to think about, and the time went quickly enough until about one o'clock, when Earne and his cousin returned to the Lapwing together. Alan could hear their shrill, sibilating Gaelic some distance away, and he knew from its tone that things had gone satisfactorily for Earne. And when they came on board there was an unmistakable air of triumph in the set of Earne's bonnet and in the pride of his step. He looked at Alan with unspeakable gratitude—almost with adoration—and then went straight to his duty, leaving his Cousin Luthe to tell his story.

"It is all right now, sir," said Luthe, "and the trouble is over. Indeed, it was not that bad. The Macrae was shaking hands with myself—he was very civil with me—but the fine to pay for all that—as was right. Earne not caring, though—he had his pleasure whatever."

"You were not long in settling the matter."

"Why would we be long? The Macrae called the witnesses, and they were telling this and that, so Earne spoke for himself. 'It is great nonsense,' he said, 'minding what Ian Black and Janet McDuff and the others will be saying. I cut the nets with my own hand and my own dirk, and I am not denying it; and what, then, is the use of taking up the Macrae's time, and the



“ ‘AND I WILL NEVER FORGET THAT GOD HIMSELF WAS
SENDING YOU.’ ”

time, moreover, that Mr. Alan Mackenzie is paying me for?' Then the Macrae said, 'The fault is acknowledged, and the damage is estimated. Six fishermen here say that ten pounds' worth of nets have been spoiled—that is the loss at the very utmost—some are saying not more than five pounds. Then Peter McDuff said, 'The damage is as much as twenty pounds;' and Shaw McDuff stood up to speak his mind also, but the Macrae was not hearing them at all; he went on talking to Earne; and 'Earne,' he said, 'the act was wilful, and moreover malicious, and the Court fines you ten pounds for the ill will. So that is twenty pounds, Earne; and if you can pay it, pay the money now; and if you cannot pay it, you must go to jail and pay it with your work.' 'The sentence is scandalously light,' said Peter McDuff in a great passion; and this time the Macrae was hearing him, and he answered him, 'You are not the Court, and you are not the counsel, McDuff, and you will be bringing yourself in for contempt of the Court, if you are not taking more care of your words;' and then he asked, 'Can you pay the money, Earne?' And Earne said, 'I can pay the money, Macrae, and I am glad to pay the money.' And he walked up to the table, and he counted out the twenty notes one by one; and said he, 'There are twenty one-pound notes of the great Bank of Scotland,

and I am sorry for the dirty road the bits of paper are taking;’ and then the Macrae said, very stern like, ‘You are dismissed, Earne Macrae;’ and with that Earne put on his bonnet and walked past the men who are hating him; and his heart was proud, and he was looking proud enough to vex the devil as well as the McDuffs. ‘And a many people were showing Earne that they were glad that he was free.’

“However, tell Earne that he must not buy any more ill will from the McDuffs. It is not safe. He will go too far some day.”

“I was telling him the same thing, sir. The McDuffs are ill to their friends and worse to their foes, and even their shadow is unlucky. It is a good thing to keep beyond it. It is, indeed.”

Alan had these words in his mind when he met Shaw McDuff on the village street. His face was black and angry, and when Alan said, Good-afternoon, Shaw,” he answered:

“Little thanks to you, Mr. Mackenzie, for interfering in our affairs. It has cost you a few pounds to-day; take care, or it may cost you many more pounds some other day. I am not apt to forget my debts—if you are.”

“I was interfering in my own affairs, Shaw. Earne is necessary to my boat, and I would have paid many more pounds rather than lose him.”

"He has been cutting our nets, and I believe he was in your employ when he did so."

"You have been paid for your nets. Why should you be angry at a poor, ignorant lad like Earne?"

"Ian Macrae was at his back—and perhaps others."

"And if any poor McDuff was in trouble, I am sure you would be at his back. You know you would. Come up the hill with me."

"I have this and that to look after, and my father is not for letting this matter drop. I shall stand at *his* back, no matter what he intends."

"Shaw, I have only done what you would have done in the same circumstances. How was I to know you had set your heart on sending the poor fellow to jail? You are not losing money by him, what then?"

"We are losing money, for we are losing standing in the country round. He was cutting our nets for simple hatred, and every one knows it, and every one is flattering him for daring to show his hatred and pay out twenty pounds for the heart pleasure it gave him. And in his heart Ian Macrae was proud of the deed. The sentence was just a joke on the McDuffs; but there is more to come of it yet—the McDuff lobster fishers are making a personal thing of it,

and Earne may get his deserts from them, if he does not from the law."

"I am astonished at you, Shaw! Such a fuss about nothing at all! The law punished Earne sufficiently, and if I for my own comfort chose to help Earne bear his punishment, that is my affair. Of course, Earne will eventually pay his fine. I shall take it gradually off his wage. The law cannot object to one man lending another man twenty pounds, nor, for the matter of that, giving him twenty. Let the subject drop. Mr. Laidlaw goes away in two days; he will be disappointed if you do not come and dine with him to-night."

"Mr. Laidlaw was not in court. He did not sympathize with Earne by his presence."

"Then you can come and break bread with him."

"I can come if, in the meantime, I can manage to soothe my father. At present he is feeling after the Macrae, and he will not be long ere he lays his hand heavy on him."

"Such ill will over a poor fisherman! I never heard tell of anything like it. What did you want done to Earne?"

"A century ago we would have hung him ourselves; fifty years ago the law would have hung him; we wanted him sent for a few years to the quarries at hard labor, under ball and

chain. That is the sentence he ought to have got, and would have got, if any one but Ian Macrae had been on the bench."

"It would have been a most cruel sentence; and as we are to be forgiven or punished just as we forgive or punish those who trespass against us, might it not have been more cruel to yourself than to Earne? For it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

"You are not in the ministry, Alan Mackenzie, and preaching comes ill from your lips."

"It comes ill from no one who is sincere, and I feel with all my soul what I have said. Come, Shaw, look over the offence. I promise you, if Earne ever cuts your nets again to discharge him."

Then Shaw, with a reluctant grace, took the hand Alan offered, and said he would try and make it possible to spend the evening at the castle. Indeed, he had no intention of relinquishing the position he had gained at Dunbrack. It was only because of Alan's known good-nature that he had ventured to show his own ill temper in such an unmistakable manner. But the little bluster and boast and threat had satisfied his pride, and Alan's frank apology left him free to continue his relations with the family.

"Why," he reflected, "should I lose the good dinners and the good company incident to Dun-

brack? Flora and Fame are now inseparable, and I am not going to be deprived of the society of both girls, and leave them entirely under Alan's influence. No! a thousand times no!" he muttered with a passionate stamp of his foot. "I am determined to win the love of Flora Dunbrack; and as for Fame, I can easily keep her so fond of me that she will not listen to a word Mackenzie says. Fame loves me; of course she loves me; she always has loved me; she never knew any one else to love—but Mackenzie—and I notice that she is very shy with him. I have a great mind to tell him that Fame and I are engaged; it will put him off his guard about Flora, and keep him from trying any of his confounded blandishments on Fame. For she might fall under his spell; he certainly pleases women, though why or how is a puzzle to me. He is not as tall as I am, he has not as fine a build as I have, he has no dignity, and I am noted for the dignity of my manner; he is but a poor talker—unless it be on theology—and if it comes to singing or dancing, he might take some lessons from me. I have as good or better chances with either girl as he has, and I am not going to give them up. That is what he would like me to do. No, thank you, Alan Mackenzie, I shall get the better of you yet."

So he went up to Dunbrack that night, and

under a pretence of a visit to a Caledonian Club at the little inn went in his handsomest Highland dress. It was exceedingly becoming to him. He looked the chief to perfection; for his stately figure and martial air were admirably expressed in the splendor of his picturesque costume and the jewelled dirk in his belt. Even his dark red hair, curling close around his brow, appeared to be precisely what the dress required; and inwardly he felt all the romance and valor of the kilt and philabeg, the plaid and the dirk. His eyes shone beneath his brows, and his fair face was flushed with this air of bygone glories and triumphs.

"He looks like Ajax or Achilles," said Flora to Fame. "Why do men wear plain clothes when they might do themselves justice?"

"They only dress up when they are going to kill each other," replied Fame; "and I don't think Ajax or Achilles was at all like Shaw. Perhaps Woden or Balder would be better. Balder had red hair, I believe."

"But he is really handsome to-night, Fame. Do you not think so?"

"Shaw varies," Fame replied. "I am sure, however, that he thinks himself handsome. Besides, his father will have told him so twenty times to-night already. I propose we ignore the circumstance."

It was, however, impossible to ignore it. Shaw expressed the fact in his every movement, in his unusual civilities and officiousness. He enjoyed walking about the large, well-furnished room; he felt that he was ornamental to it, and that things were improved by an association with him.

At first Alan was amused by this little drama of conscious physical beauty, and he sat watching it without any resentment until he noticed Shaw's marked attention to Flora. He had asked him to dinner with the express information that the minister's visit was nearly over, and that he would enjoy a last conversation with him. But Shaw appeared to think that with the military kilt and jacket the society of ladies was the only correct thing. And, somehow or other, he carried the evening; even Jessie was attracted by his physical ascendancy, and perhaps more so by the domination of his powerful will exerting itself to maintain that ascendancy.

Alan made no effort to dispute Shaw's triumph. With an apparent unconcern he reclined in a large chair by the open window, and chatted to Mr. Laidlaw or his mother or either of the girls who came near him. His smile was as bright, his manner as cheerful, as if there was no Shaw McDuff in the room; but there was a

tumult in the depths of his heart which made him tremble. Something there was crying passionately, "The silly, vain, conceited cad! Does he think good women can be caught with tartan and horsehair and a velvet jacket? I have as much right to wear the Highland dress as he has, and I will get a suit of the Mackenzie tartan which shall make the McDuff caparison mean and tawdry and shabby." But after a moment's reflection he thought far more positively, "No; I will not make my heart and soul mean and tawdry and shabby in order to render McDuff's small vanity a failure." And this resolve at once strengthened him. He shook off the languor of incipient chagrin, asked Jessie to play them a strathspey, and led Flora out to dance it with him. It was not what Shaw desired; it would be sharing honors too much, but no excuse was possible, and though Alan had not thought of the proposal in that light, the dancing did equalize matters. Alan's evening suit looked fittest for the dance, for it is not given to man to appear martial and festive at the same time.

Two days after this evening of strained civilities Mr. Laidlaw and Mrs. Mackenzie returned to Glasgow. She intended to bring the provost back to Dunbrack with her, and then would come the month of August and the advent of

the men ready for slaughter. Every one missed the minister, for, in spite of some ecclesiastical peculiarities, he had shown himself to be a man of sincere character and not unamiable disposition. Jessie wept a little, and was silent and forlorn for a few days, and then she went with a double earnestness to her bridal preparations. They had been delayed by her lover's presence and there was a great deal of work to be overtaken. But Flora and Fame offered their help, and found sitting together over the dainty garments a delightful way of spending the last hot days of July.

The intimacy of the girls had become more and more sisterly; they were not happy apart; they dressed alike; they had the same opinions and almost the same thoughts. They were proud of each other, and they loved each other after a womanly fashion, which is only calculable without the masculine element. As yet, this element had not been an interfering one; but it was impossible to say how long it would be quiescent. They spoke freely of Alan and Shaw; it was their custom to make pleasant remarks about them; but these remarks were only superficial; they consisted of opinions and criticisms as to their dress, manners, conversation, or appearance; but they were just such criticisms as any girls coming in contact with certain

young men were likely to make. Thus, one morning Flora said:

"I think Shaw looked very well last night. The Highland dress becomes him;" and Fame answered:

"A great deal depends upon wearing it constantly. Shaw has the habit of wearing it, and therefore wears it well. When men put it on now and then they are awkward and self-conscious."

"Do you like Shaw's hair, Fame?"

"You mean the color? Yes; I think it suits him. Red hair seems precisely right on Shaw. But I like best hair the color of Alan's. I think Alan is so gentlemanly."

"And good-natured."

"And good-hearted."

"He would not hurt anything. He only bought his dog Bevis two weeks ago, and the creature idolizes him."

"To be sure, Flora; dogs know whom to idolize."

"And yet Sykes's dog, according to Dickens, loved a very bad man." This was Flora's remark, and Fame answered with a sigh, "Well, Sykes was a good man in his dog's opinion, and you know 'opinion is the rate of things.'"

"So it is," answered Flora, finishing the quotation:

“ ‘From hence our blessings flow,
I have a better fate than kings,
Because I think it so.’ ”

Then holding up the lawn tie she was ruffling with lace, “Is it not pretty? Just fit for a minister’s bride.” And before Fame could answer she had let her thoughts wander to the “Logan Lee,” and was singing with all its mirthful abandon:

“Some say that I love young Polmood,
And some say he loves not me;
But I think I’m a match for the best of his blood,
Though I had not a ewe on the *Logan Lee*.”

Such bits of talk, with numberless variations, accompanied their busy fingers, and were not unfrequently varied by others of a far different order; for Fame had below her quick, passionate temperament a layer of feeling strangely sensitive to the supernatural and a tendency continually to revert to it. She was a great dreamer and a fervid believer in dreams, and there was much in Flora’s nature which responded to Fame’s faith in the unseen. For Flora had inherited through her father the pensive, poetic, superstitious Highland temperament, which is the very antipodes of the Lowland theological materialism; and therefore, though Fame’s ideas were strange and unauthor-

ized, something within Flora encouraged their discussion.

One morning as soon as they had seated themselves and the needles began to glint through the white cloth, Fame said, "I had such a strange dream this morning. I came wide-awake out of it, as if some one had said to me, 'There, now, the vision is over.' I thought I saw a soldier lying wounded in a trench, and when he turned his face to me it was Alan Mackenzie."

"Of all unlikely things, that is the most unlikely, Fame. Alan will never be a soldier."

"Who knows? Dreams—come how it may—*do* read the future. God in all ages has spoken to men in dreams and by the oracles that dwell in darkness. Dreams are large possessions; how poor I would be without my night visions! I think we may have senses that are only roused when we are asleep."

"Once," said Flora, "I had a dream which my father read to me in such a way that I have never forgot it. Besides, it was just before his death, and to him it came sweetly true, I have no doubt. I thought I was wandering wretchedly over great hills, tired, cold, and alone; and then I opened my eyes, and I was in my own dear home, and the fire was burning brightly, and the tea table set, and father was watching me, and waiting until I woke up. And when I

crept close into his arms and told him my dream he said, "It was just that way with earth pilgrims; when all the joy of life was gone, and they were lonely and full of sorrows, they woke up some morning in the Paradise of God, and found all they had lost there."

"That was a beautiful reading of a dream," answered Fame. "Say what you will, I know that when I am sleeping my spirit often goes out of the body, and is spoken to by other spirits who are out of the body at the same time. They meet, and often messages and warnings are thus given:

" 'After midnight, when dreams fall,
Somewhat before the morning gray,
I, wandering so gaily over the world
From my tired limbs at home,'

see and hear many strange things. It is so. Father often says the night-time of the body is the day-time of the soul."

"So, then, Fame, if we are dreamers, we really live two lives here?"

"Yes; one while we are fully awake, another while we are fully asleep. At the border line, between sleeping and waking, when the impressions of each state meet, we often receive from our inner selves admonishings, forebodings, and warnings in regard to the future."

"However, Fame, I do not think your inner self told you the truth about Alan. I cannot conceive of any circumstance likely to take him to the army. It is a profession he has no inclination for. He might desire to be a minister, but a soldier! that is not to be thought of. His father and mother delight in him; they would not listen to such a thing, even if he wished it."

"I think he is a delightful young man."

Then Flora looked at Fame with a quick suspicion, but it was instantly banished by the girl's face and manner, which were only pleasantly indifferent. So she answered, "Every one thinks Alan delightful. I wonder if that is good? Perhaps, if some people disliked him, it might be more in his favor."

"Well, then, Shaw dislikes him with all his soul."

"Oh, Fame, that is incredible! How can you say such a thing?"

"He does. I know Shaw McDuff. I am knowing him well all my life. I see the look no one else sees—I hear—I feel—I know."

"Why should he hate Alan?"

"Hate does not require a reason."

"You could not persuade Alan that Shaw hated him."

"I am not sure of that. Hate must make itself felt."

"Hate is not greater than love, and where love is hate cannot come. So Alan may not feel it. The love of mother, sister, friends must have more influence than the hate of one person."

"Hate can kill."

"Love can make alive, then."

"I wish father was here; he would explain what I mean; however, mind what I say, Shaw McDuff does not love Alan Mackenzie, and that will be seen and heard tell of."

"I am sorry you have said it. Come, let us go into the garden, till the wind blows the words out of the room. They hurt me, Fame."

Yet at that very hour Alan and Shaw were having no very friendly conversation. Alan had gone early down to the sea, and was lazily reading a novel as the boat rocked with the full tide at her pier. Earne was cleaning the already bright brass work, and singing softly "The Rover of Lochryan" when Shaw walked forward and stepped on board the Lapwing. Alan called out cheerfully:

"Glad to see you, Shaw. Come into the shade."

"I was going past, and you looked so comfortable under your blowing awning that I could not resist a call."

"I was just going to have a cup of coffee and a smoke. Will you join me?"

"Yes; I should like to."

The coffee was soon ready, and the young men drank it and smoked for some time in a contented silence. Shaw was the first to break it. "I wonder if Fame Macrae is still at Dunbrack?" he asked; and Alan answered readily, "She was there when I left home this morning, I am happy to say."

"I want to see her very much."

"Then you must go up to Dunbrack."

"That is not what I like. I think she ought to be more at home."

"I suppose she knows best where she ought to be. I don't think it is our business, Shaw."

"Not your business, perhaps, but certainly mine. Of course, it is a good thing for Fame to be in Miss Flora's company—I am not denying that—but I want her nearer at hand."

"Perhaps she may oblige you, if you ask her," answered Alan coldly. "My opinion is, she will be apt to do just as she wants to do. She has a will to match her beauty, and that is saying a great deal."

"I have been thinking for some time, Alan, that I ought to tell you that Fame and I are engaged. She is very handsome, and I—"

"You thought you had better put up the warning, 'No trespassing.' Thank you, Shaw."

And Alan took the information so coolly that

Shaw had a feeling of intense mortification. He looked angrily, yes hatefully, at the complacent young man, lazily puffing the smoke of his cigar windward; and wondered what he could say to ruffle his aggravating serenity. He had not decided on any words strong enough, when Alan continued:

"I congratulate you, Shaw. Fame is a beauty, and in other respects a most charming woman. Very few men could be worthy of her."

"She thinks Shaw McDuff is; I am not saying she is right."

"No."

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing but what I said; you are a lucky man."

"I saw how much you admired her, and I—"

"You were not jealous, surely? I assure you there is not the slightest reason."

"Jealous! There is not a man in the Highlands, no, nor in all Scotland, I would be jealous of. Fame and I understand each other. She has grown up at my side. I may say that I have formed her mind—made her all she is. Ian Macrae, her father, has been a poor dreaming, not overly wise creature the last few years."

"Oh, but he is a lawyer and a magistrate."

"What kind of one, pray? He is *the* Macrae,

and that accounts for his popularity. Macraes are in the majority round here."

"And you feared I might fall in love with Fame, and wished to spare me the pain of a refusal? You are kind, Shaw. Will you believe that I never entertained such an idea? All the same, thanks! Take one more cup of coffee."

"No, thank you. I had better go now. Any discussion of this subject might end in some misunderstanding."

"But there is no need to discuss the subject; for, as I said before, I never felt any desire to fall in love with Fame."

Then there was silence, and Alan calmly lit another cigar. His manner was so polite, his face so indifferent, that Shaw could not make either a ground of complaint; and yet he was irritated and humbled beyond speech. He had come with news which he expected would make a sensation, and Alan had taken it as if it was a weather report. He had thought to put Alan under an obligation by his frank avowal, and Alan had disclaimed all necessity for it. He was almost in the position of a man who has had a gift refused, and his heart burned with a sense of defeat and vexation. He took himself off the boat with that air of high-spirited bravado which generally hides the white feather somewhere,

and went stamping along the village street to thoughts of furious anger and revenge.

"He never felt any desire to fall in love with Fame! That is a lie!" he muttered; "or else he is in love with Flora. Confound his cool, calm impudence! He never felt any desire to fall in love with Fame! Oh! oh! oh!" and the bitter laugh with which he emphasized the ejaculations was vocal with the hatred he could not then utter.

As for Alan, he sat quite still, smoking and thinking for a long time; and in that passionate pause of time, will it be believed, there first of all came to him not only a desire to love Fame, but also a sudden revelation that Fame already loved him. "I have been blind," he thought, "and I have been warned off before I trespassed—well, then *what?*" He rose hastily, flung his cigar into the water, and cried out, "Get under way, Earne. I want a breath of the sea."

"There is not much sea on, sir; only a northerly lipper. What way will I be steering, sir?"

"Any way will do that takes me far enough away from land. I don't want any more callers, Earne."

"I must be alone—I must think—" he said to himself; and he lay down on the deck of the boat and considered the information that had been given him by Shaw, and also that which had

been revealed to him by his own heart. No man, however, is made angry by the knowledge, however unexpected, that he is beloved by a beautiful woman; and if Alan had any such feeling it was directed against his own stupidity for being so blind and so indifferent to what he easily foresaw might become a very tragic affair. He forced himself to recall all Flora's sweetness and affection, he assured himself that Flora, and only Flora, had his love; and he asked his heart with a little indignant amazement, "Is it possible that I could ever love any other woman? Is it possible I could ever think of Fane Macrae with any warmer affection than sincere admiring friendship?" And he answered his heart emphatically, "No!"

For he did not reflect that the first step toward any wrong deed is the consideration as to *whether it is possible*.

CHAPTER V.

WHO WAS TO BLAME?

THAT night, when Alan came to the dinner-table Fame was absent; and it struck him as it never had before what a space she filled in their daily life. Flora was in her loveliest mood, with just a touch of her old contradiction; and he was sensitive enough to the charm of her personality; yet the dark, glowing, fitful Fame, with her pretty follies and her wise sayings, her reeling music and her martial songs, was an obvious want, even to Jessie and Flora. The evening went slowly away; something piquant, almost poignant was removed, and Jessie said:

"How dull we are to-night! I wish Fame was here."

"So do I," answered Flora; "I am lonely; I think I am stupid without her."

"Why did she go away?" asked Alan, in a tone of indifference.

"Shaw McDuff came for her. He said she was

required at home. I think he came to exhibit his new dog-cart and the fine horse he has bought for it."

"A new dog-cart, eh, Flora? He never told me he was going to get a dog-cart."

"He says he required to have one in the season. I suppose he then goes about a great deal. He is a fine shot, and fine shots are welcome at all the big houses."

There was a long pause after these remarks. Jessie was writing to her lover, and Alan, sitting beside Flora, was holding her ball of pink wool, and wondering if he should tell what he had heard of Fame's engagement. Shaw had not laid any charge of secrecy on him. His call for Fame had the appearance of "proving his averments." It seemed as if he wished to give Alan an opportunity to say, "Fame is engaged to Shaw McDuff, and he is not pleased at her spending so much time with us." At any rate, when Jessie had folded and sealed her letter, and brought her sewing beside Alan, he could no longer keep his information.

"Flora, Jessie, what do you think Shaw told me to-day?" he asked.

"That he had a nearly new dog-cart for sale, or a fine horse, or something or other of that kind," answered Flora with a shrug of her shoulders and a meaning glance at her lover.

"That he was invited to the Grants of Loch Grant, or that the Dunbars of Rossheath were begging his company before the rich Englishman at Benmorvan Castle could secure him," said Jessie.

"Or that her Majesty's company at Balmoral would not be complete without him," continued Flora. "The man wearies me with his excellences, and his exaggerations, and his expectations. What good or great thing is there he does not expect?"

"He made me his confidant to-day concerning one of his anticipated good things. He says he is engaged to Fame."

"I do not believe one word of such a story," replied Flora angrily.

"Nor do I," added Jessie. "I suppose I know how an engaged man ought to behave, and I never saw Shaw McDuff look at Fame, or speak to her, or act toward her as if they were engaged. Compare his behavior with the behavior of my James. That settles the matter, I should think."

"I do not believe one word of that story," reiterated Flora. "Do you imagine Fame could have been constantly with me for weeks, and never have said anything about her engagement?—unless, indeed, she had some very good reason for keeping it secret."

"Shaw says they have been engaged from Fame's childhood; that he formed Fame's mind and made her all that she is; so there can be no question of any need for secrecy."

"He form Fame's mind! Oh, what a—an untruth!" cried Flora. "Why, he is quite unable to understand her. He does not approve of her queer ideas, and there have been times when I even thought he did not admire her personally. I shall ask Fame a question or two when I see her. I do not believe a girl of her straight, upright nature could love a man so radically false-hearted and selfish as Shaw McDuff."

"You must remember," said Alan, "that they have grown up together, and that for nine months every year Shaw is the only gentleman in the neighborhood fit for Fame to associate with."

"As for growing up together, I do not count that of any importance," said Jessie. "I had never seen my James one year ago, yet at the first of our acquaintance it was as if we had known each other forever."

And Alan clasped Flora's hand at these words, and she answered the appeal with a smile so ravishing and full of understanding that he quite forgot how interesting their conversation had become until Jessie asked:

"Why did he tell you this bit of news just

now, Alan? Has he grown jealous of you? Have you given him any reason to be jealous of you?"

Then Flora raised her eyes from her work and fixed them upon Alan, and the young man smiled confidently back at her. "I never gave Shaw the least cause for jealousy," he answered. "You have seen me constantly, Jessie, and you know that if I have shown any preference it has been for Flora; and you also must have seen how Flora received my preferences. With Flora so undemonstrative and Shaw jealous of the wrong girl, it is enough to make me give him some occasion for jealousy in the future."

"That would be dangerous," said Jessie.

"It would also be wrong and cruel," said Flora. "You might unwittingly win love you did not want, and wound love you did want."

"I am not the man to do either," answered Alan with a glance that Flora understood in its full meaning. And at that hour Alan meant all that Flora understood.

"Well," continued Jessie, "I have only one thing to say, Alan; do not let Shaw drive you into temptation. You are not Saint Anthony, and Fame is a very potent temptation."

"I have a talisman against her charms, Jessie. I have known Fame some weeks, and not fallen under her spell. Am I likely to do so now?"

"Circumstances alter cases; there might come some motive hitherto absent; and then?"

"Then I should find my talisman sufficient;" and the flash of intelligence which passed between Alan and Flora was so vivid, that even Jessie's attention was arrested and she looked curiously at the two. But the suspicion was a fleeting one, and nothing occurred to detain or strengthen it.

Three days passed without any visit from Fame, and the family at Dunbrack had begun seriously to accept Shaw's story of the engagement.

"Of course, she is doing as he tells her," said Jessie.

"Of course, she is doing nothing of the kind," contradicted Flora. "She may be engaged to Shaw, but that would not make her do what Shaw ordered her to do. I should say it would have a contrary effect. What do you think, Alan?"

"I think if Fame wished to be at Dunbrack she would be here at this moment. Then, the inference is that some one, presumably Shaw McDuff, has more of her affection than we have."

"Affection for Shaw McDuff! It is quite inconceivable. No one but a mother or father could love him."

"Oh, but, Flora, you are prejudiced," answered Jessie; "he is a fine young man every way; most women would like him."

"I think better of 'most women' than you do, Jessie."

Circumstantial evidence was indeed against Fame, but it was as apparently true and as really false as it generally is. Fame had remained away in order to have a new dress made; and on the fourth evening she came to dinner in it, and was received with outspoken and generous admiration. It was only a lawn gown of the color of ripe wheat, with a bunch of poppies in its belt; but it was very effective and becoming. Flora, Jessie, Alan all petted and praised her, and the girl glowed and smiled and beamed on them with a ravishing beauty and affection. The evening was a little festival in her honor, and nobody mentioned Shaw; he was, as it were, quite outside the happy circle, even in memory.

In the morning, as the girls sat together, it was different. Flora lifted her eyes several times and looked intently at the beautiful girl before her. Her face was as calm as a lily on a pond, and there was certainly nothing but serene happiness behind the smiling mouth and eyes. She wondered how best to approach the subject of Shaw's claim, and then finding no cunningly devised words that suited her purpose, she went, as it was natural for her to do, directly to the point.

"Fame, Shaw says that you are going to marry him. I wonder you never told me."

Astonishment, incredulity, anger flashed into Fame's face. She let her work fall, and looking straight at Flora, uttered slowly two passionate words:

"Shaw lies!"

"He told Alan he was engaged to you."

"He told Alan a lie, and he knew it was a lie. I am not engaged to Shaw McDuff. I would rather die than be his wife. I am knowing him too well to marry him."

"Whatever, then, could make him tell Alan such a falsehood?"

"Shaw has a soul out of the bottomless pit of selfishness. He is jealous of every one; even a girl like me might get some little pleasure or attention he wanted for himself." Then after a moment's consideration she continued: "Yes, I will tell you what happened last summer. Young Gillian Grant liked me very much. He came every day to see father, and always brought me a basket of hothouse flowers or grapes, or, perhaps, some beautiful book he wished me to read. Then Lady Grant came to see me, and she asked me to a dance at Loch-Grant, and father sent to Glasgow and bought me a pretty gown of white tarletan spangled with gilt, and if you will not think me vain, Flora, I looked very well indeed that night of the dance, and Gillian Grant never left my side; and though he said no foolish words, I knew that

he loved me. In spite of Shaw's black looks I came home so happy, and waited for Gillian to call the next day. And he did not call, and after four days had gone I got a little sorrowful note from him. It was dated at Edinburgh, and he said only: 'Farewell, lovely and beloved! May you always be happy. Gillian Grant.' And I was very wretched, and *I* confess to you that I felt heartbroken; and one day I said to Shaw, 'Why does Gillian Grant come no more? Have you quarrelled with him?' And he laughed and answered, 'Gillian Grant has gone to India. He will be two years away.' And after that the Grants were cool and unfriendly, and things were not pleasant at Loch-Grant even for Shaw, and he began to speak badly of the Grants. I saw no more of them. Can you not imagine now what took place to cause this change?"

"I am sure I can. Dear Fame, it was too bad."

"I know that Shaw told Gillian I was engaged to him; and Lady Grant was angry at me for taking Gillian's gifts and being kind to her son. She thought, of course, I was kind to him for the gifts. Was not that a dreadful position to be in?"

"Oh, Fame, how mortified you must have felt! And you could not explain?"

"No; I could explain nothing. It was impossible to go and ask Lady Grant if Shaw had said

such a thing. I could not return poor Gillian's gifts. I had simply to bear the shameful thoughts I knew Lady Grant, very naturally, entertained of me. Long after I heard Gillian had fainted the morning after the ball in a little shooting box on Ben Grant; and I have no doubt it was there Shaw told him the untruth. He was sick for three days, and then he went with his tutor for a long tour in the East. Shaw had been staying at Loch-Grant for two weeks, but he came home the day Gillian left."

"Thank you, Fame, for telling me this sad story. It confirms my opinion of Shaw McDuff. Have you forgotten Gillian?"

"No; I do not forget easily, but I have ceased to fret about the circumstance. It is over. He has forgotten me, I have no doubt. And the break up and parting was so full of misunderstanding and so painful that I try to keep it out of my memory. That is the reason I have not spoken of it to you before. But you have never told me anything about your lovers, yet you must have had lovers?"

"While I was in Canada I lived alone with father. I stayed in barracks or in camp with him. If he had to move from point to point, I went with him. Sometimes young officers looked as if they admired me, but none of them ever said so."

"But in Glasgow last winter?"

"In Glasgow last winter I saw a great many young gentlemen, undeveloped lawyers and doctors and ministers and merchants. Many of them did me the honor to dance with me, and some even called on me afterward. They were all afraid to go further—I was an oddity—a colonial—a backwoods girl. I wanted the Glasgow stamp and mintage; my speech had not the local tone, and the local idioms were Greek to me. I was a hazardous quantity, not available for mere flirtation, and not safe for matrimony. Besides, I had no fortune worth speaking of to atone for my deficiencies. Can you understand?"

"Very well; I am in the same position in another way. But there is Alan! Perhaps there was an idea that you were engaged to him?"

"If so, I am positive that Alan never gave it." Then Flora hesitated, and if any certain feeling had come to her help she would have confessed her engagement to Alan; but she could not instantly separate the advisable from the inadvisable; and the moment that might have saved her much sorrow slipped away, its gift unused, its duty missed and left undone. For Flora only added, "As to Alan, you can see for yourself how he feels toward me."

"Yes," answered Fame, "he treats you just

like a sister ; I am sure he loves you quite as much as he loves Jessie."

"I think he does," said Flora ; but there was a faint tone of irritation in her voice. "Alan is loving and lovable. He is not perfect, but—"

"I think he is perfect. His disposition is always noble. He could not do a mean or cruel thing. Now, Shaw is cruel even to little children and dumb animals."

"Yet he is very religious. He would not miss a church service even for his Highland Glory, the great Duke himself. I heard him say so."

"All the same, he is cruel and selfish and false-hearted."

"And you think Alan the reverse of these things?"

"Just so."

"Are you not the least little bit in love with Alan, and therefore prejudiced in his favor?"

"He is not in love with me. I, also, am like a little sister to him, though he does not care for me as he does for you. There is a difference ; I can feel it. You are one of his household, I am only a stranger."

"You are my dear friend. Next winter you will come to Glasgow and astonish the young men of St. Mungo's town. They are very big and handsome, and they can sing Scotch songs, and

dance reels, and recite! My dear Fame, their recitations are wonderful. Every young man recites. Some have selections from Shakespeare, some from Robert Burns, some from Walter Scott, but they all recite; and really at the supper-table, when they have had a glass of toddy, they do it very well."

After this diversion the conversation kept clear of danger, but amid all its changes Flora's heart beat to some sad presentiment, which her friend's calm, candid face did not dispel.

In the evening Shaw and Alan came into the dining-room together. They had been playing some kind of game all afternoon with "the books,"* and Shaw was twelve pounds the richer; but he was as sombre as if he had been the loser; while Alan was brimming with quips, and jokes, and merry compliments. All of the girls were particularly lovely that night. The warmth had led them to choose white gowns; Jessie's had not a suggestion of color, but Flora's and Fame's diaphanous robes waved over pale pink tissue, and there were bows of pale pink ribbon about them; and they had pink roses at their girdles, and each one a sweet rose in her braided hair; and surely two young men never sat down to eat with three fairer women.

But nothing can brighten a room filled with an

*A pack of cards.

evil influence, and Shaw's jealous, envious mood infected the atmosphere, just as a lowering thunder-storm might.

Even his twelve pounds annoyed him. He *felt* the sovereigns in his pocket, though he kept asking himself why he should do so? Besides, Alan did not seem to care for their loss, and that also was irritating. "The rich, wasteful fool!" he thought whenever he looked at him. "How he smiles, and nods, and passes his little intelligences around! And how the women adore him! Fools, all of them!"

It was not possible to resist long this inimical influence of a hateful soul; for human beings are as sensitive to emanations from individuals as they are to those from other forms of life; and the sphere of a rose is not more obvious by its sweet odor than the sphere of an ill-natured soul by that spiritual force of hate which it creates and which unconsciously enters into the organism of those within it. For thoughts are powers, even when unexpressed, and go forth armed with influences for good or ill on other minds. There was soon short silences and malapropos remarks at the table; something checked every impulse to smile, and though no one realized it, the very voice of Shaw had a contagious dissatisfaction; and his envious anger caused the nerves of every one to vibrate to it. So that when he asked Alan to

order his dog-cart there was a conscious feeling of relief; and Jessie made an effort to render the parting moments more sympathetic.

"It is so very early, Mr. McDuff," she said; "can we not have a song or a dance—or something?"

"It is too warm to dance," said Flora, "but Fame can sing for us. She has a wonderful new song about Angus MacRory,

"Whose soul-stirring note
Gives strength to the arms
That give wings to the boat."

Come, Fame, sing to the glory of the MacLeods and the brave-hearted Rory!"

"Fame will require to put on her hat and mantilla at once," answered Shaw, in a voice whose sharp authority there was no denying. Fame looked at him a moment, dropped her eyes on her work, and said:

"I am not going down the hill at all to-night."

"Your father will be expecting you, Fame."

"My father will not be expecting me for two or three days."

"You are not treating your father very kindly these last weeks."

"That is my father's affair—not yours."

"And you are not treating me well, either."

"That is your affair—not mine;" then turning

to Flora, she asked, "Is this row right? five stitches plain, three purled, one cast over, two together?"

"It is right, Fame."

"Are you going with me, Fame?"

"No."

Then Jessie with a conciliating air came forward, saying, "I have asked Fame to stay with us, Mr. McDuff, and her promise is given, and we will not let her break it; so you really must excuse her to-night." And as Fame took no further notice of him, and Alan's smiling silence was intolerable, the irate young man saw nothing better than to accept this explanation.

He left the room, however, with his usual fine air, and Alan followed him. Then Jessie began her nightly letter to her lover; she had much to tell him, and she soon became absorbed in her occupation. Flora and Fame put down their work and went to the open window. They stood there quite silent; a strange and apparently causeless sadness had suddenly mastered Flora. Her soul sank back upon itself, and seemed to retire from all affection. Tears, unreasonable tears, without motive or occasion, made her heart and eyes fill. She presaged something sorrowful, she knew not what, and she believed her presage; and this fearful, intensive feeling not only struck inward, but also outward; for her body answered the mood of

her soul by a peculiar lassitude and inertia, which she felt unable to resist.

Fame did not attempt conversation; that fine courtesy, which is the subtle, natural aroma of a spirit enlightened by the heart, taught her instinctively to respect a frame of mind which was beyond her understanding; and she stood quietly at Flora's side looking into the dim garden, where the twilight, embalmed in the tall August lilies, was mingling its soft glamour with the young moon's radiance. Under the great vault of the wood's branches a nightingale was softly, almost solemnly, singing; and as they listened the sweet sounds were crashed out by the wheels of Shaw's dog-cart rattling rapidly down the stony hill.

Then Alan returned to the parlor. They heard him whistling gaily to himself as he came through the house; and his first words were:

"It is a glorious night; let us go out and become a part of it. This room feels as if there was something unhappy in it; let us go into the garden; it is warm, and sweet, and calm as a resting wheel."

"I cannot possibly go," said Jessie; "I have a long letter to write; but by all means take Flora and Fame. When you come in we will have a game of whist, and some raspberries and curds and cream."

"Fame will go with you, Alan," said Flora. "It is impossible for me to walk to-night. I am not all here—not quite well. If I go out I shall take cold or something worse."

"Nonsense! It will do you good, Flora."

"It will not. Leave me for a little. I want to find myself. I do wish you and Fame would go away for half an hour. I shall be glad to be alone."

"Come then, Fame, you and I will go. May we come back in half an hour?"

"Yes. I shall have finished my letter in half an hour," said Jessie.

"And perhaps I shall have found out what is the matter with me," added Flora.

For a few minutes she remained standing at the window, watching Alan and Fame slowly pacing up and down the broad, flagged walk leading to the main entrance. Alan had a cigar in his mouth, and she heard him say something, at which Fame laughed heartily. Then they turned into another avenue, and Flora lay down on the sofa and tried to reason with herself, and especially to conquer that physical incapacity for family claims which looked so ill-natured, but which had really been beyond her control.

The avenue into which Alan and Fame had turned was a narrow one facing the south, and

full of heliotrope. The delicious scent filled the air, and the lovely moon transfigured the place with her soft, melancholy radiance. The secret silences of the night and all the mystical influences of nature were rained down upon them. They gradually ceased speaking—they stood still—without warning or intention they were in the very high place of temptation. And the moonlight added to Fame's beauty a something inexpressible. It fell over her face and form like a charmed garment. Alan could not choose but feel it. There was a delicious pause, conscious and sensitive, and then one word, soft as a lover's whisper:

"Fame!"

She lifted her face; her eyes stirred his heart like fire and wine; he knew that she loved him, and he stooped and kissed her. And after that kiss he could not think, he could not pause; he was like a man in a swift current, the touch of Fame's lips had carried him off his feet, and he did not at the moment care where he was carried.

For one half-hour there was an interlude of perfect happiness in the old garden; then they went slowly back to the house, and Flora roused herself, and with forced smiles came to meet them. Jessie had laid out the cards and the counters for the game of whist, and the talk was

only of kings and queens and aces and honors; the love scene just enacted among the heliotropes appeared to be quite forgotten. For in some way, without a word on the subject, Alan had made Fame understand that it was not to be spoken of. She could not have explained how this fact had been impressed upon her, unless it was by Alan's attitude of good-natured indifference to all things but trumps and tricks. Not even in his "good-night" courtesies could the most suspicious rival have detected anything unusual.

She did not know what to think of this attitude, but she was sure it involved nothing wrong or unkind. She told herself that the revelation had come to both of them so suddenly and unawares that it was not likely Alan could decide at once on the best course to be taken. And then she also remembered Jessie's approaching marriage, and put Alan and herself in much the same relation to it as Flora had already done. She was, however, so happy that she longed to share her happiness with her friend, but that night nothing about Flora invited confidential conversation. She was tired and silent, and had feelings she could only explain under the convenient excuse of headache. Besides, Fame remembered that she had already told Flora about Gillian Grant, and she felt it would require

an effort to speak of another lover so soon after this confession. So she lay down with the dream in her heart, unshared and unread, and was not sorry, for a while at least, to hide it there.

In the meantime Shaw had gone straight to his father. He walked into the small parlor, where Peter McDuff was reading the only book that really interested him—his private ledger. He closed the lock with a snap as Shaw entered and said he was glad to see him, adding, "But what brought you home so before hours? Were the ladies not there?"

"They were not there for *me*, father. I felt in the way. I was not wanted."

"Not wanted! That is clearly impossible," said the old man in a tone of incredulity.

"Will you tell me how we stand with Macrae? I mean how we really stand. I want the truth—all of it."

"We have a mortgage on Macrae's house and enclosed land for one thousand pounds; and there has been half a year's interest due this little while. I am not satisfied about the interest. Macrae has paid it unwillingly for as much as two years, and he seems to have forgotten there is now money due."

"Why do you not make him pay it?"

"Can I make him? What do you think?"

"There is the law."

"Just so. But this is how we stand to the law. I loaned Macrae one thousand pounds, and he has already paid me back one thousand six hundred pounds. If he took the case to the Court of Equity, he would win; if he took it to the Common Law Court, we might be indicted for usury—our interest being beyond the lawful—and I have been thinking lately that Macrae has at last got this idea into his head; or perhaps some one has put it there for him; he hasn't any money-brains of his own."

"His daughter made a point of insulting me to-night." Then Shaw told his father what had occurred at Dunbrack, and before he had finished Peter was snapping his fingers and uttering all kinds of bad words in Gaelic—the language he used for such purposes.

"We will be putting the screw on him, Shaw," he said when his son ceased speaking. "I will call for my interest in the morning, and I will also let him understand the principal is wanted, and that, too, at once. It is at my call."

"You cannot frighten Macrae, father."

"I can and I will. But stop—is that the best way? You must not give up the girl. She

means the Macrae land. You must, you must win her, Shaw. She is yours by right."

"She is in love with young Mackenzie; so is the other girl."

"That is nonsense—most unlikely nonsense! I am not believing it. Fame was showing off her power; let her do it while it is her day—your day will come."

"Oh, indeed, I shall neither beck nor bow to Fame Macrae. There is Meriton's sister, and Jean Stewart, and Grace Frazer, and some few others that I can wive for the asking."

"Just so. You are right; but Fame has advantages—for you. A little policy, Shaw, a little policy may mean a deal of property. Speak out to the girl. Women are easily cowed. A word or two makes most of them step down from their high horse. I'll see Macrae in the morning, and as soon as you get the wilful lass outside Dunbrack and in her own surroundings ask her to marry you. Don't take 'no' from her. I'm feared you have delayed the straight question o'er long. ' Women like all things squared and settled."

"You might name the subject to Macrae. His word might help."

"Or hinder—likely. Your own word is best of all. You'll be requiring no other word. Just offer yourself; I would like to see the woman

who would refuse you! She would have to be a born idiot."

This opinion soothed the wounded pride of the young man. He got up and walked about the room with a stately air, furtively watching his reflection upon the white wall as he did so. Certainly he had an imposing, dignified figure, and his father's words did not seem over-complimentary or very unlikely. And when they had drank a glass of toddy together, and discussed the matter in detail, Shaw went to sleep with the firm conviction in his heart that as far as Fame Macrae was concerned he had only to ask and to have.

While the McDuffs were arriving at this comfortable conclusion Flora was striving to discover the "why" of her singular depression. When Fame left her she locked her door, and turned with a face full of sensitive inquiry to the picture of Lady Sara Bella. It had been handsomely framed, and stood on an easel near the comfortable chair Flora used in her hours of reflection and relaxation. A singular friendship had grown up between this living, loving girl and the painted image of the ancestress whom she so closely resembled. They had become *familiars*. They held long conversations with each other. Flora was accustomed to tell her the secrets of her heart and soul, to ask her

advice, to seek her sympathy, even to stand before her a minute or two when she was prettily dressed, that she might have her approval; in short, she treated the image of the dead lady as if it represented her own inner self.

"My dear," she said softly, "I am sorrowful, and I do not know why. Do you?"

This night, however, though she waited long, no answer came to her question. But as she sat motionless in that sweet receptive mood which makes spiritual influence possible, she was suddenly conscious of that holy desire which God Himself forms in the soul, that secret prayer within us, which is a fire that never goes out, a lamp incessantly burning before God, so that "if we sleep our heart waketh." Into that communion no stranger entereth; but it sufficeth. When the morning came her spirit had shaken off this egotism of sorrow, she rose with a song in her heart, and was ready to "*enjoy herself*"—a very striking and satisfactory condition, for the happiness we receive from ourselves is much greater than that we receive from our surroundings.

Alan met her with a radiant face and with good tidings. The provost and Mrs. Mackenzie were coming, and the castle was already in a joyous hurry of preparing for the master, who had not yet seen his new home. The young man

bore no traces of mental struggle nor of night watching. And, indeed, he had not suffered from either. The incident with Fame had been very pleasant to him, for it had possessed in an eminent degree that forbidden flavor, usually found to be so alluring. Not only that, it gave to his thoughts of Shaw a certain zest of triumph, and he tasted them, as it were, with that faint smile of satisfaction which always springs from some interior source of complacency. It was not the first time that he had kissed a pretty woman under the moon and in sweet-scented gardens; the women had never seemed to dislike it, and it had on no occasion brought him any severe penalty. He was not angry with himself for "the little folly," and he did not suppose Fame took his passing infatuation seriously. He met her precisely as he met her every other morning; and, at any rate, all feelings and events that day were merged in the delightful excitement incident to the master's home coming. Alan, with twenty boys from the village to help him, was cutting branches and making garlands and hanging wreaths; and inside the house the three girls, with all the help they could press into service, were equally busy.

And then, just in time to be cooked for the provost's dinner, Earne came sheepishly up to the castle with a brace of grouse. It was not

the twelfth of August, but no one asked Earne a question. In fact, he was much thanked and made of, and went back to the Lapwing with a look on his face which it was well Shaw McDuff did not see. For he would have felt it to be not only a breach of the peace, but also a positive proof of a violation of the game laws.

CHAPTER VI.

THE INEVITABLE QUESTION.

It was a hot August morning; the twelfth had come and gone, and the hills were free to the sportsmen; but Provost Mackenzie was not for the hills. He had realized his vision of the "harts upon the high mountains," had seen those mighty beasts, the wing-footed red deer, taking the heather, the burns, the rocks, and the peat with that long, swinging trot which carries them at such tremendous pace over the roughest country; had heard a "royal"—his breath coming like smoke out of his nostrils—bellowing defiance, and answered by another and another stag, till the whole valley seemed alive with them. And in Glasgow he had promised himself to shoot a "royal," or at least a ten-pointer; but he could not now lift his gun against one. And it was the Macrae's doing.

For he had gone on the first morning of his visit to Dunbrack to see his old companion, and they had clung to each other like brothers ever since that meeting. And Macrae during the

last few years had taken up strange ideas about killing animals and birds for mere sport; and he had said words to Mackenzie that had made his rifle a burden.

"I'll not go with you if you are taking the rifle," was his answer to Mackenzie's invitation to walk with him to Dunbrack covers. "If I went to a slaughter-house for amusement, I would be thinking myself a brute, and I am seeing little difference in going to the hills to do murder on the birds. No, indeed!"

"Come, Macrae, we have a lawful supremācy over the animal world. And animals hunt each other; cats naturally kill birds, and a hound requires no teaching in order to hunt a fox."

"That is proving nothing for you, Mackenzie, unless you think yourself justified in adopting the morals of the cat and the hound. And as for our 'supremacy,' as you call it, it is o'er like that of Satan—a supremacy of pain and cruelty. Oh, man! man! I want you to respect this mysterious animal world, that 'groaneth and travaileth in pain with us, waiting for the redemption of the body.' We are to be saved together. Mind that."

"Macrae, you are surely not thinking that animals have souls?"

"Well, Mackenzie, we are not blinded with the light we have about our own souls; and I

am not knowing anything certain about the spiritual nature of beasts. But we can take our Bibles and say with Bishop Butler that animals can make out from that Book quite as good a case for their future life as man can."

"We'll talk that statement over some other time, Macrae. I am doubting it."

"I am not feared to do so. Search for yourself, and you will learn a deal in that search. However, I'll be reminding you now that the Saviour of men took up His first lodging with the beasts. By a perfect offering of Himself, He had come to put an end to their sacrifice. And, moreover, St. Peter's vision of the vessel let down from heaven, with all manner of living creatures in it, you must take notice, was '*drawn up again into heaven*;' and we are told distinctly they had been cleansed, as well as man, by the Great Atonement. We are to be saved together. Mind that!"

"Don't go too far, Macrae. These are new thoughts to me."

"For seven years I have been thinking them out. There is, moreover, a general belief in them that we will not listen to. Nobody denies that beasts and birds have the second sight—that is, spiritual sight. They see ghosts and spiritual beings, and are terrified by the supernatural, just as we are. The 'night-side of

nature' broods o'er them as well as o'er us, Mackenzie."

"You have the case in your heart, at any rate, Macrae."

"I have. And I love you so well that I will not let you sin against your own soul by sinning against the life you cannot give to any creature."

"Man is a cruel animal naturally, Macrae."

"He is. He has denied women their freedom and right for thousands of years; and he will not emancipate beasts until he has grown nearer to the Maker of them. It is not possible to take a walk through this village without hearing such sad, plaintive voices come to us from the out-houses and the obscure buildings, where we hold them captive—veritable prisons, in which we bind and tie them. Yet, praise God! 'He saveth both man and beast.' Those are His own words, and, moreover, He is asking them in the same blessed Book 'to praise Him, and to bless Him.' You see, He is pleased to have their praise and blessing. He may hear the larks singing, as well as the angels; and the voices of the stags on the mountains and the crowing of the grouse in the heather be right welcome to Him. He made them; and He tells us the young ravens and the young lions cry to Him for food, and are fed by His hand. Now, Mackenzie, are you for killing the grouse, or shall

we go down to the sea, and hear the waters singing the ancient hymn 'The sea is His, and He made it, and His hands formed the dry land'?"

And Mackenzie put his rifle on a high shelf and turned with a smile to his friend. "You have the day," he answered cheerfully. "I'll buy no more powder and shot, Macrae."

Many conversations on this subject followed this initial one, and Mackenzie could not shoot against them. As he stood in the open door of Dunbrack Castle that hot August morning he saw on the spur of a high hill a great stag standing. The luminous sky behind him set the splendid beast in startling clearness as he angrily turned his antlered head, scenting his human stalkers. And the sight gave Mackenzie a heart-ache; he turned his gaze into his own garden, and there he saw something that called to his face that peculiar smile of gratification which is born of realized hope. He saw Alan and Flora walking together, and their attitude was that of lover-like confidence, of delightful companionship, and of that sweet familiarity which only exists when two hearts are one. As he looked with happy hopes at the couple they stood still, and Flora gathered a flower and put it in Alan's coat, and the young man clasped her hands in his own. Then the provost turned away with

a sigh that was not sorrowful; it was rather a tribute to the memory of his own youth than a symptom of any anxiety about the lovers. As he was looking for his hat and walking stick Mrs. Mackenzie joined him.

"I heard you pottering about, Robert," she said, "and no wonder. The canes and whips and sticks of all kinds and for all purposes that Alan leaves here are just beyond counting; and the shooting caps and travelling caps and boating caps take up every peg and nail; aye, and they are hanging one on the top of the other. Where are you for this morning, Robert?"

"I am going to see Ian Macrae; and I would not wonder if we end on the Lapwing. The herring fleet is near, and I would like to see the nets shot. You wouldn't mind, Marian, if I was later than ordinar?"

"Stay your heart full, Robert. It isn't many holidays you give yourself. I am real glad that you have found a friend like Ian Macrae."

"Marian, I saw something five minutes ago that pleased me well. I saw Alan and Flora together in the garden, and if they are not lovers, I shall never trust my judgment in love matters again."

"Tuts, Robert! They have been lovers longer than they know themselves. I am most sure they are promised to each other."

"And why did you not tell me?"

"I was waiting to be told myself."

"What for are they keeping the fact a secret, I wonder?"

"It will be Flora's whim; and I would be willing to wager—if I did wager, which I don't—that she does not want it known until Jessie is married and away. I am saying nothing against the lassie, and so you need not look negatives at me; indeed, I think she had a kind thought to Jessie and ourselves in the secret. I know I am glad nothing has been said about it."

"I don't believe that, Marian; it is not like you."

"It is the very truth, Robert. Two sets of engaged lovers in the house at one and the same time would have been beyond all bearing. Nobody would believe the trouble I've had with Jessie's marriage, and if Alan also had been thinking of making himself a married man, I would just have gone distracted and given up the battle."

"I thought when I first saw him with that little girl of Macrae's that she would be Mrs. Alan Mackenzie. What a beauty she is!"

"Highland as a peat."

"None the worse for it. I am Highland myself."

"None the worse for it, Robert. You are as good a man as any sinful woman was ever married to. But you are in the wrong for once; Alan's heart is set on Flora. Happen, he might do worse."

"I don't think he could do better. I hope what you say is the truth."

"I have not changed look or word with him on the subject, but I am sure it may be, if the lassie wills it. She has the hank in her own hand. For both their sakes I wish she had more money. They are neither of them knowing the worth of a penny piece."

"The little lass is prudent enough. Crawford, her lawyer, told me she never got outside the rim of the shilling—and money cannot buy true love."

"True enough, but it can buy things that are perfectly necessary to true love."

"Money or no money, I hope they will make a match of it."

"Well, then, I am mostly sure Flora has given her promise, and what she promises she will perform as certainly as she is a christened woman. She is stubborn beyond believing that way."

"I am well pleased to hear that. For the very opposite is one of Alan's faults; and there is nothing better for a man as shiftless as Alan than a steadfast, loving wife like Flora."

"Shifty! You should not say such a word in the same breath with Alan. You can give a dog a bad name and then hang him. And you may call your lad 'shifty' till you call shifty to him. It is fact as death, and I hope I will not have to remind you of it again. You said last night after Shaw McDuff went away that you were thankful Alan could not be likened to him."

"Did I say that? Let it pass. McDuff has faults, but a man's a man for a' that."

"That is one of Robert Burns's lies. There are plenty of creatures in kilts and breeks that are not men for a' that."

"Here comes our lad himself! Alan, will you go to the Lapwing?"

Alan was delighted to go, and he began to search the hat-rack for his boating cap. As he did so, he lifted an umbrella with a laugh, and pointing to its broken bones and tattered silk, said to his mother:

"It is the fault of Bevis. My dog does not get on well with the Morandaroch dogs. It took the weight of this umbrella yesterday to make him behave like a Christian to Shaw's dog. Bevis is simply hating the creature, and if they meet they fly at each other's throats without a word."

"You ought not to encourage Bevis, and I am afraid you do," said the provost.

"On the contrary, I never take Bevis out with-

out advising him to behave properly. I durst not take upon me to do more, for Bevis is very strict about his rights, and he considers fighting his inalienable right. As we go through the village this morning notice the look on his face; it says as plainly as words could, 'Are there any dogs here wanting a fight?' "

"Then why keep a bulldog, Alan?" said the provost to the young man as they began their walk through the wood, the dog Bevis trotting at their side in a very good humor.

"Well, father, fighting is the work bulldogs came into the world to do; and I am sure you will allow they do it as well as they can. I may not have this quality of duty myself, but I admire it, even in a dog. Then notice how little fuss they make about accomplishing their work; without noise, without passion or ostentation, they go at another dog quietly and effectively. No fuss and fury about their fighting; a bulldog is as much opposed to boasting as to 'letting go,' and after a course of Shaw McDuff a bulldog's modesty is a relief."

"Is Shaw a favorite with the ladies—I mean with Jessie and Flora and that little girl of Macrae's?"

"He says he is; he told me he was engaged to Fame Macrae."

"I would not have thought it. He seemed to

admire Flora most; but I am an old man, and maybe not over clear in my judgment of such affairs," and the provost looked at his son, thinking he might receive some confession which would settle his new hope into certainty.

Alan made no such confession. He laughed at Shaw's pretensions, and said, "Flora Dunbrack would not be caught with chaff."

"Well, well," continued the father, a little disappointed, "if you have any liking for either Flora or Fame, do not be making little of Shaw McDuff. He is what Highlanders call 'a pretty man.'"

"Not he, sir. Girls like something better than beauty; for instance, a sweet, frank, honorable nature. Now, Shaw is as little capable of these virtues as a worm is of walking or a bear of flying. He is also underbred, and there is nothing more distasteful to a nice woman."

"He seems, however, in great request. He was at Dunallan yesterday with all the lords and gentry."

"He was there because he is a fine shot, and shooting grouse, my dear sir, is not now mere amusement. Our noblemen stock the London markets; and a sportsman who does not shatter the birds, and so render them unsalable, is a very welcome guest. Shaw and Dunallan's keeper killed easily yesterday seventy-five brace of grouse

besides hares; and as Dunallan sends his game regularly to London, you may see why Shaw is his guest."

Thus they talked until they came in sight of Macrae's house, a ghostly-looking mansion, square and gray, and having even in the bright sunshine an air of gloom and of utter weariness of existence. It was of rough granite with windows small and narrow, and a roof of red sandstone; and it stood in a grove of decaying trees, peopled with colonies of magpies, pigeons, and a whole presbytery of crows. If a house can become saturated with the experiences of mortal life, Macrae's home had beyond expression the air of old, unhappy memories.

Therefore, the sight of the master waiting at its gate to welcome them was the more remarkable, for his face was the face of a calm, sabbatic mystic; of one who lived in a mountain atmosphere of that inward serenity which is in itself a sacrament. He put his hand in Mackenzie's and smiled gravely at Alan, and then without a word the three men stood listening to Fame, whose voice was thrilling the space between them with the indescribable pathos of an exile's song:

"From the lone shielings of the misty islands
Mountains divide us, and the waste of seas;
Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides."

The Inevitable Question 159

Then Macrae softly took up the chorus with her, and to its melancholy notes they entered the dwelling:

“Fair these broad meads, these hoary woods are grand;
But we are exiles from our native land.”

“Good-morning, Fame,” cried Alan; “do not tear our hearts to pieces so early in the morning. Have you no gayer word for us?” And she nodded and laughed, and struck out the martial air that Alan loved. The notes were sharp as the clang of steel on steel, and he threw himself at once with spirit-stirring animation into the wild declamation of the “Gathering of the Clans”:

“Glengarry will stand with arm of steel,
And Keppoch is blood from head to heel;
The whiggers o’ Skye may gang to the deil,
When Connal, and Donald, and gallant Clan Ronald
Are all in the field and know not to yield;
Are all in array and hastening away
To welcome their prince in the morning.

“The Appin will come while coming is good;
The stern Macintosh is of trusty blood;
And the Athol men keen as fire from the steel,
Macpherson for Charlie will battle the deil;
Come Moidart, and Mory, Macgunn, and MacCraw,
McDugalds, McDonalds, MacDevils and a’,
And the wild Macraes, more swift than the roe,
Worse devils than a’;
Come, welcome your prince in the morning.”

They sang the stirring song till they felt the iron in their blood, and forgot everything but the bewitching cry, "*To arms!*" They had summoned the past, and brought it back to stir with its old tumult the peaceful present; and Prince Charlie, though his bones were dust and his sword rust, lived and dominated the two young hearts who had called him up by the spell of their enthusiasm. When they ceased singing they turned round with faces aflame to catch the answering glow in other faces; but they were alone. And Fame looked at Alan with her soul in her eyes, and the temptation was very great. For they stood in an atmosphere which they had mutually charged with passionate feeling, and their hearts throbbed to its vibrations. Alan's will, undisciplined and unexercised, abdicated all control in the presence of a fascination so potent and so alluring. For a few minutes life was held in a delicious, sensitive pause; then they heard the approach of Mackenzie and Macrae, and the spell was broken.

"We want some lunch, Fame," said Macrae. "We are going afterward to the Lapwing."

"But why trouble Fame?" asked Alan. "There is cold grouse in plenty on board and everything else necessary. Earne will give us a lunch fit for a Highland chief."

"So he will. I know what Earne can do," said Mackenzie. "Let us go at once."

"May I not go with you?" asked Fame.

"No," answered her father. "We may be out very late, and I am not caring to leave the house alone. I have not paid McDuff's interest yet, and I have papers lying about. I want you to stay by the house, Fame."

Much disappointed, Fame put down her hat and cloak, but that she might dispute, much less disobey her father's wish, never occurred to her as a possibility. Yet she watched the three men off to the water with a feeling of envy.

"To be a woman," she sighed, "is the first calamity; every other sorrow may come after that misfortune."

After she had eaten her solitary lunch she wondered what she should do with herself. It was only two o'clock, and the long, long afternoon was before her. If she could have walked up to Dunbrack the inquiry would be solved, but she was not to leave the house, and the house had not any social attractions. Unless the minister's wife came in there was no one to expect. She had had enough music for that day. Alan was gone, and she could sing to no lower pitch. She was not very fond of reading, and none of the books she lifted attracted her.

Well, there was her sewing; she could sew and think at the same time, and thought was full of romances. Any delightful thing she desired was

waiting for her in the realm of thought. There, everything might happen to her wish; and her wishes at this time were all connected with Alan. They were quite innocent wishes; she had no suspicion that she was wronging her friend; she was sorry that she could not make her a confidante in her hopes. "Why not?" she asked her heart as she sat sewing; and then she compelled herself to answer the question with the utmost truthfulness:

In the first place, Alan's behavior made her understand that their love was not yet to be spoken of. Then Flora invited no confidence on the subject; she was herself hiding a love secret, and she naturally avoided too close approaches to it. Also, she was always reticent concerning love and lovers; and Fame was yet abashed whenever she remembered her confession about Gillian Grant. Flora had neither then nor since discussed or "talked over" the circumstance with her. So, until there was something sure and decided between herself and Alan—in fact, until Alan confessed his love for her publicly—she did not feel as if she could speak of it. And perhaps more forcible than all these considerations was that innate, innermost consciousness that silence and solitude are the almost necessary conditions for the growth of a feeling so sacred and secret as the delicate emotion of love. And confessed or un-

confessed, there is blended with this retirement of the heart a kind of selfishness, a desire to brood silently over the new, strange feeling; to enjoy it without participation; to keep for personal pleasure every tone and glance and movement of the beloved. Other reasons arising from the peculiar circumstances of the Mackenzies and her own family pervaded and strengthened the ones general to all lovers; and after an hour's sweet thought concerning Alan's evident affection for her, she concluded that this flower of their hearts was yet too tender and too much in the bud to set out in the public eye, or subject to general approval or criticism. And she was happy in this conclusion; it relieved her from present embarrassments, and permitted her to enjoy her love without advices or interferences of any kind.

Having come to this satisfactory state of mind, she began to sing as she worked, soft, tender little songs that gradually died away as thought and feeling took more entire possession of her mind, surrendering it finally to those vague, elusive impressions which cannot be translated into words, or even ideas, but by means of which one soul enters into relations with another soul. So happy was she that she ceased asking of herself any "why" or "wherefore." The joy of loving was sufficient.

Suddenly, in the very midst of this trance of restful pleasure the delicate antennæ of her intuitive nature told her to be "on guard," and she lifted her head, and then rose and went to the open window. She saw no one, but she heard footsteps approaching, and she said instantly to herself:

"It is Shaw McDuff."

Arrived at this conclusion, she sat down and began again to sew and to sing; and when Shaw entered the house she was vowing in musical impetuosity:

"To buy herself a tartan plaid,
And follow the lad wi' the white cockade."

He stood at the open door waiting for her to welcome him, but she was sitting with her back to the door, and therefore not compelled to be aware of his presence. Besides, she was too busy attending to "the lad with the white cockade." Finally there was a moment's pause and he said:

"Fame, you know very well I am here. Where is your father?"

"I know very well that you saw my father go with the Mackenzies to the Lapwing. Why, then, do you ask after him?"

"I want to know if you are alone, or is Miss Dunbrack here?"

"I am at present a lone abider."

"Why do you not ask me to sit down?"

"You are not used to wait for any such ceremony."

"I have something to say to you, Fame. It is of the greatest importance. My father and the Macrae had some very hard words this morning."

"Then why do you come here? If your father spoke ill to the Macrae, he spoke ill to me also; and you and your father are the same in my sight."

"I hope not—I hope not, Fame! My father is an old man, with old-time, unreasonable passions. I hope you are seeing some difference in us, for I am young, and people say not unhandsome, and I have learned to be more lenient in my judgments, as, indeed, is the way of the world these days."

"You are one to me. And, pray, what was Peter McDuff saying to my father?"

"He is wanting his money, Fame. It is more than sixteen years since he loaned it."

"He has been well paid—over paid—for the use of it. I am knowing that much."

"And I am believing some threats were made about the getting of it. You know, at any time my father can sell this house above your head."

"Let him dare it. Just let him dare it."

"You can prevent it, Fame; you, and you only, can prevent it."

"Of course I can prevent it. I shall not see my dear father put out of the old home of the Macraes by any McDuff. You may be sure of that."

"But how can you prevent it? We have the law on our side."

"*'We'?*" I thought you were in it. Do you think I will tell you *'how'*? And as to the law, it may be on our side. I think it is."

"Now, Fame, be reasonable. You know that I love you."

"I do not wish you to love me. If you could put your love in my hand I would throw it away."

"That is absolute nonsense. You have loved me all your life."

She went on singing and did not answer this statement.

"And you are going to marry me, Fame. Because you know that if you do not marry me your father will have to flit. That is the long and the short of it."

"And the height and the depth of it is that I would rather jump into the Trodhu chasm than marry you. What for were you telling Mr. Mackenzie I was engaged to you? You knew it was a lie."

"I do not tell lies."

"You would lie to the devil. I have no more to say to you. Do your worst—I am not afraid of you."

The Inevitable Question 167

"Fame, in spite of your temper, you know that I am dear to you, and that you are dear to me. Be sensible, my sweet girl!"

"I am not your sweet girl, and I will not listen to you.

"'I'll buy myself a tartan plaid,
And follow the lad wi' the white cockade.'"

At this interruption of song Shaw became black angry at the scornful girl, and he said passionately:

"I suppose the lad wi' the white cockade is Alan Mackenzie? Well, I have my thumb on him also."

"Gilderoy is a bonny boy,
Has roses to his shoon;
His stockings are of silken soy,
His garters hanging down."

"Fame Macrae, it will be the worse for you and the old man if you do not stop singing."

"The name of the old man is Mr. Ian Macrae when you find good manners enough to say it. And I am not caring a bone button for your threats. It is not Beelzebub rules this world, or I might be trying to please you—'Gilderoy is a bonny boy'—"

"Confound you, Fame! I will—"

"If you swear at me again I will tell the minister of you. You swear at me, and then ask me

to marry you! I would deserve to be your wife if I could be a wicked girl like that."

"You are in love with Alan Mackenzie, and you think he is in love with you, and you are very much mistaken; he is already—"

"I would not have the presumption to be in love with Alan Mackenzie. I am far from judging myself worthy of his love."

"Worthy! Good God!"

"Go out of this house, Shaw McDuff. How dare you take the Holy One's name in your mouth as a witness to your bad temper?"

"I was wrong, very far wrong, Fame. It is your fault. Your beauty and your scorn drive me crazy."

"Keep away from me. I am far from seeking your company. I can do well without it."

"I am asking you once more to be my wife—to be Mrs. Shaw McDuff. I will be a good husband to you. Think before you refuse me."

"Thank you, but I am not seeking a husband of any kind. And I will be obliged if you stop saying to any one that I am engaged to you. I am caring for my good name, sir. And now, if you will not leave me, I will bring in Effie Ross and Luckie Wrath to hear your talking. For I do not think myself safe in your hands without witnesses. That much I am knowing well."

"I have been loving you ever since you were a schoolgirl; is this the end of our wooing?"

"This is the very end, and you will take notice that it does not end like a play or a novel—Jack does not get Jill." Then she opened a side door and called, "Effie, Luckie, come here! I am needing both of you, and that instant;" and as the two women hurried through the flagged passage, Shaw put on his Glengarry, and clashing the door behind him went fuming away, his passion waxing and waxing with every step he took. The tumult in his heart was at first a chaotic rage, but it soon found some relief in the constant iteration of two enraging, stormful assertions:

"This is Alan Mackenzie's doing! By fair or foul, I will marry the girl!"

CHAPTER VII.

WHITHER? WHEREFORE?

UNDER the majestic headlands of Ross, tinged with sapphire loom of sunset, the Lapwing was luffing to keep the failing breeze; but the tide was running with her, and would soon be at flood, and then she could easily bring the little harbor of Morandaroch. Earne was sailing her, Macrae and the Mackenzies silently watching the great calm ocean, dim with heat and vapor, little mountainous islands seeming to rise out of it. When the sun set, up rose the moon, and the Lapwing made her way through quivering moonbeams.

Now, nature does not initially make us think, it makes us feel; and the visions of the hills and of these lonely places of the sea filled the hearts of the watchers. They were all in that rare mood when the over-belief, which we call supernatural, becomes a fundamental truth; and inward voices from the reality of unseen things speaks and is heard. For, beyond all peradventure,

"there is life that breathes not, powers there are
That touch each other to the quick in modes
Which the gross world no sense hath to perceive,
No soul to dream of."

The long, sensitive silence was broken by Alan, who exclaimed almost petulantly:

"What does it all mean? What are we? What are we here for?"

Then Macrae turned his face to the young man, and there was a look of fire in it as he answered:

"We are souls of passage. We are here for a purchase."

"For a purchase?"

"Yes. There are souls who have finished their course, and who no more suffer His will, because they *do* His will. They are His messengers, crossing their glorious pinions between the constellations, or floating on wings of silence through all the sidereal spaces. But there are also souls of passage who are sometimes *here* and sometimes *there*; here, for a purchase; there, for rest and restoration—a marvellous school of transition, in which for the hope of attaining unto the perfect stature of the Son of God the deathless spirit becomes a little child, and dwells in a house of clay; and though sure of its immortality submits to years and to what we are calling death."

"What would the minister say to such a belief, sir?"

"My faith in reincarnation does not impair my orthodoxy. Man in all his stages of progression must have faith and a creed embodying that faith; and I am doubting if any creed but Calvinism would have dealt with the wild men of the Highlands. In my past life or lives it has doubtless been a good schoolmaster to my spiritual senses."

"You think, then, Ian, that you have lived in this world before? Having left it, why should you come back?" asked Mackenzie.

"Why should I not be coming back as often as I can acquire fresh knowledge and fresh experience? Will any one of us three, Robert, be carrying away so much from this life as to have nothing to repay us for returning to it?"

"But we are not conscious of our return, nor do we remember our previous existences."

"Does the butterfly take with it into the air the organs and desires of the worm from which it sprung? Are you yourself, Robert, remembering what happened to you when in your mother's arms? Are you remembering what you were doing ten years ago, five years ago, one year ago at this time? If you are for making *memory* the test of existence, then what becomes of those parts of your life when you were sleeping or

unconscious, or which you have forgotten? It would be no more for our interest to remember our past than it would be to foresee our future:

“‘Oh, wise and kind that love that leads us step by step!’

But I say it on my faith in God’s love that sooner or later in this incarnation, or in some future one, the whole of our training will be revealed to us. When we are ready for such knowledge it is not withheld. And they who have ever had it can smile at trouble and death. They *know* that death has no power over them.”

“If we could come back adult,” said Alan, “I could accept such a faith gladly; but to go through childhood again!”

“That is the wonderful gate,” cried Macrae. “Only God could have thought of such a marvellous introduction to the struggles and trials of manhood and womanhood! Think of your own childhood, Alan—its joys, its flashes of illumination, its presages of work and wonders, and its dreams of self-denial and of doing good and great things. If you had come adult, you would have lost all the opportunities of correction and instruction, which as a child you took willingly from your parents and teachers. I am thinking, Alan, the childhood of each incarnation is as necessary as the manhood—maybe more so.”

"But, Ian," said Mackenzie, "we are to be made perfect not by living, but through suffering."

"Just so. We only really live in so far as we do feel and suffer. Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation, was made perfect through suffering, though without sin, tempted and tried in every manner possible to humanity. But this remits not our necessary discipline in the same school:

"Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born,
But not within ourselves, our souls will be forlorn;
The Cross of Golgotha we look unto in vain,
Unless within ourselves it be set up again.'"

"I have often had intuitions like these," said Mackenzie, "but have not dared to pursue them."

"What is intuition? Inborn experience, that which the soul knoweth of old and from former lives. For all our earth experiences are stored up as tendencies and are transmitted through an unbroken individuality. All of us to-day are the result of the infinite past through which we have sinned, suffered, learned, and enjoyed. Rory Beg, the saddler, does not remember every stitch he took when an apprentice; but every stitch helped to make him a saddler. You may

not remember every life you have lived, Robert, but every one has helped to make you just what you are."

"Then you think we are immortal as regards the past, as well as the future?"

"You may assure yourself, Robert, that God's love for you does not date from your nativity fifty years ago. He has loved you with an everlasting love. Is it likely He made us a half-eternal being? Have we an existence with but one end? No, no! A line must have two ends, whether it be physical or spiritual. 'The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.' How did Moses rise to this height? I saw Alan lift one of Charles Kingsley's books the other day. In it he says these words, 'Out of God's bosom, the fount of life, we came, through selfish, stormy youth, through manhood not altogether useless, through calm and slow old age; with many contrite tears we return whence we came, to go forth again with fresh powers and higher knowledge to nobler work.'"

"I thought Kingsley was thoroughly orthodox."

"So he is, and so also was Dr. Priestley, yet in his correspondence with Dr. Price (page 372) he says reincarnation is 'the original doc-

trine of the soul, and what is necessary to make the Christian system complete and consistent.' ”

“Is not that saying too much, Ian?”

“No. Without reincarnation the terrible inequalities of birth are inexplicable. Pour into a vessel holding one hundred alkaline bases an acid, and it will with unerring certainty combine with the alkali, and that only, for which it has the greatest affinity. In the same way the wretched babe born of drunken, vicious parents, amid surroundings of want and woe, is justly born so; for it has created in a former life such attractions as render it impossible to be born under any other conditions. If we three had been other than we were in the past, we should be other than we are to-day. We were born when and where we were because our condition was what it was. Thus, character is destiny. Reincarnation is eternal justice. It does not permit us to blame Adam, or Eve, or our parents, or our fate, or our God.”

“Then we make our own destiny?” asked Alan.

“Yes; for we are reaping just what we sow. The winds of God are blowing all the time. If our sails are set, we catch them and go onward. If they are furled, we do not catch them. We are tossed hither and thither, delayed, and make

no progress. Is that the wind's fault? It is our own fault."

"I know," answered Alan; "I know well that when I do wrong nothing and no one is to blame but myself. It is I and I only."

"Then, Alan, when you realize this, stand up like a man and say, 'It is my own doing, therefore, I can undo it. The condition I have made I can unmake. If others had made it or it was my predestined fate, I might despair; but as it is my own work I can demolish it. All the strength I want is in myself and in Him who gives grace to help in every hour of need. I will bury my dead past. I will never forget that every thought and act is laid up by myself for myself. No such effort can be lost, for soul force, like all other forms of force, must have results. It is a cause, and in the eternal law of nature must have its corresponding effect. Indeed, the affinity which in reincarnation guides a soul to its most fitting body is but an example of the law of force, taking the direction of the least resistance.'"

"When life ceases—"

"Man! Man Robert! life never ceases. Death is like the setting of the sun. The sun never sets, life never ceases; only certain phenomena occur, which are purely illusive and occasioned in both cases by the feebleness of human vision.

But I have said more than enough, because too many phases of the subject have been brought forward, and none of them fully discussed. The joy of knowledge is in its acquirement. I have set the door open, go in and buy the truth for yourselves. We are now with the herring boats, shall we stay and see them draw the nets?"

"No," answered Mackenzie. "We will just walk quietly home. You have filled my heart, Ian; I feel as I never felt before the greatness of my destiny."

"A little lower than the angels, Robert; and aye growing nearer to them. To become a celestial being, that is the glorious aim and hope of every *soul of passage*."

There was no further conversation; the two older men stood silently together watching the herring boats, Mackenzie's hand resting lovingly on Macrae's shoulder; and Alan and Earne were equally satisfied with each other's quiet companionship. Alan stood by the helm, Earne cast eyes full of devotion on him, and Alan answered such glances with a smile of confidence that was meat and drink to Earne's affection, which was canine-like in its unreasoning attachment.

They parted at the pier, Earne remaining on the boat, Macrae going to his home, and the Mackenzies taking the nearest road to Dun-

brack. They spoke very seldom as they climbed the hill; Macrae had troubled their deepest thoughts, and the solemnity of the walk through the dark, whispering wood intensified the spiritual wistfulness of their half-believing.

As they approached the castle there was a sound of music and singing that clashed unpleasantly with their mood; and when they entered the parlor the scene was still more antagonistic, for Shaw had brought up some foolish but exceedingly taking negro melody, and every one seemed possessed by its nonsensical spirit. Mrs. Mackenzie was laughing, Jessie and Flora laughing and singing, and Shaw was just emphasizing with a pirouette the last ridiculous line of the chorus. The whole atmosphere of the room was that of unreality and folly. The provost very quickly left it, and Alan soon became angry; for the attitude of Shaw with Flora and Jessie was, in Alan's opinion, far too familiar. He resented his officious amiability at the piano; he noticed that Shaw stooped his head to Flora's head when there was no occasion for such intimacy; and that his hand managed to come in contact with Flora's hand in turning the pages of the song. And he thought Flora was more friendly than she ought to have been. Besides which, she had hardly noticed his entrance; in

fact, she had included his father and himself in her welcome, and he felt that he ought to have received some special notice.

But Flora was a little offended at being left all day without any notice of such intention, and she had had, for the first time, a vague jealousy of Fame. She believed Fame had been in the Lapwing with them, while she had not even been asked to share their sail. And her deep, almost instinctive, doubt of Alan was evidenced by her making inquiry about Fame in the provost's presence. She felt, whether she acknowledged the feeling or not, that Alan could not deceive her if his father was present; and she was not sure of him otherwise. So as soon as the nonsensical song was over she asked:

"Did you take Fame with you? She said she would be here to-day, and she has not kept her promise."

"No," answered Alan; "we did not take any one with us."

"Did you see her this morning?"

"For a short time. She was going to give us a lunch, but I did not let her. We lunched on the boat."

"I wonder she did not come up here."

"I heard her father tell her not to leave the house. He said something about his papers lying loose."

At this point the provost left the room, and Mrs. Mackenzie shortly after called her son into the dining-room. Dinner was ready for them, and Alan was not loth to go. He divined the jealous feeling that had prompted Flora's inquiries, and he was ashamed before his own soul. Yet he was hungry, and he ate heartily and silently, the laughing and talking in the parlor pricking him like pins the while; but when his appetite had been satisfied he said he had a tired headache and needed sleep, and so made his escape from circumstances which, that night, he did not care to oppose or control.

The provost nodded understandingly to his son. He thought Macrae was at the bottom of his averseness to company—as he undoubtedly was in a great measure—and he said to his wife, "Alan has a fine spiritual nature, Marian; Macrae has been talking to-night, I have told you before in what manner, and Alan was much impressed."

"I am not sure if such talk is good for Alan—I don't believe it is," she answered. "Calvinism is the best of anchors for a lad like Alan. He needs something solid and sure to tie to, and Calvinism won't let him float on this and that tide of feeling and supposition; it fastens him to a rock."

"Is it well to be fastened?"

"It is over-late to settle that question to-night,

Robert; and I am going to send the lassies off to their bed. Go there yourself, and get a good sleep; I'm not caring for you to sit half the night wide-awake and dreaming."

The next three days were wet and stormy; no one could leave the house, but they were happy days to Alan. In them he more than recovered his ground with Flora, and when they wearied of talking about themselves they reverted with ever-increasing interest to Macrae's faith in reincarnation. Flora had many personal reasons for accepting it; indeed, she declared that her whole life at Dunbrack had been one of recollection; that the house was familiar to her; that she could feel the tragedies to which certain rooms had been witnesses; that she knew the men and women whose pictured faces remained in it; that she loved some and feared and hated others, and was conscious that they belonged to her, and she to them. Many strange experiences, hitherto hidden in her heart, she revealed to Alan; and when she found that he thoroughly understood and believed her, she loved him for it with the highest love in her nature.

And never before had Alan been so much in love with the girl he had chosen for his wife. He lost at times all power and all desire to hide his affection for her under that guise of familiar

friendship which had hitherto been sufficient; and Mrs. Mackenzie said to Jessie she was very sure all their light-hearted daffing and serious talking would end in standing before a minister, and getting a house of their own.

Jessie would not admit this likelihood. She thought the bad weather would account for it. "What could young people do for amusement, shut in the house together, but make love after some fashion?" she asked, adding, "Alan wasters everything he has, even his heart love. Don't set him thinking of marrying just yet, mother; one wedding in a twelvemonth is enough, even for a provost of Glasgow. But I will say this much, if Fame Macrae does not interfere, I am pretty sure we shall count Flora in our family. I am not opposed to it, neither is James."

"Your father is anxious for it, and I am thinking Alan could easily seek further and fare worse."

"Well, mother, everything in its season. This bridal is not bespoken yet—let alone other reasons."

"It is just uncommon likely, though. I have seen things, and I am not dull in the uptake."

"What about contingencies, mother? You must always take them into account; and Fame is a very strong contingency."

"You are a far, forecasting woman, Jessie.

I don't think Fame is a contingency at all. Fame will marry Shaw."

"Fame hates Shaw."

"That is neither here nor there. She is in the power of the charmer—or the snare of the fowler, if you think that best—and she has not the strength to step outside of it."

"I think you are wrong; but what for are we talking about possibilities when there are certainties enough to keep us busy?"

"Well, then, let it all go for a passing remark. When is James coming?"

"Not until the day before our marriage; and he wants to leave as soon as the ceremony is over."

"Ceremony! It is little of that you are having—the service and a bit of breakfast and not half a dozen to break the bride cake with you. I hope when Alan marries he will be understanding the meaning of 'ceremony' better."

Then Alan came whistling into the room. He had his hat in his hand, and said he was going to the boat, and might not be home to dinner."

"Where is your father?" asked Mrs. Mackenzie.

"He is gone with Macrae to see his head shepherd, Ivan Crieff. They will talk all day. Ivan is a strange creature."

"However, Alan did not go to the Lapwing. Before he reached her pier some one touched him on the shoulder. It was Shaw McDuff, and Alan felt it was Shaw McDuff, though he pretended to be astonished.

"I want to speak to you particularly, Mr. Mackenzie," he said; "will you come into my poor house?"

"'Mr. Mackenzie' and 'your poor house.' What do you mean, Shaw? I am going on the water, will you come with me?"

"No. I have a question or two to ask you." Then they went into Shaw's "poor house," and as soon as they were seated Shaw took from his pocket-book a piece of paper Alan recognized only too well. "When can you pay this?" he asked a little peremptorily.

"It is not due yet, Shaw. You said it could stand until the end of September."

"It was due on the twentieth of August. I made a foolish promise, which circumstances compel me to retract. I want the money for investment, and I want it now."

"I have not got it to give you. But I shall have it before the end of September."

"That will not suit me. The note is drawn on Robert Mackenzie and Company. It is overdue. Robert Mackenzie is here, why not ask him to meet it at once?"

"Father is here for a holiday. He is trying not to speak or even think of money. I should be very sorry to intrude business on him at present."

"Two hundred pounds cannot be 'business' to Robert Mackenzie and Company. If you do not like to ask him for it, I have no such scruples."

"Shaw, you must not ask him. I beg you, as a particular favor, to wait a little longer. If I knew where to find Harry Seaford, he owes me three hundred pounds, and would doubtless pay it."

"Harry Seaford owes you three hundred pounds? That is strange."

"I loaned him the money when he went to France last spring. I have not seen him since, nor have I heard from him for eight or ten weeks."

"I can tell you where to find him. He is at Colonel Forfar's. You might ride over to Forfar Lodge; it is only thirty miles and a good road all the way."

"I will do so, but promise me that you will not trouble my father while I am away."

"My proposal implies that. I hope, at least, you consider me a gentleman."

"Why are you asking me for the money now, Shaw? You said of your own good will it could stand until the end of September—that if I paid

you before leaving Dunbrack it would be all right. Of course, I have not thought of the matter since that promise. I was very much obliged to you for it, and I am certainly much astonished at the withdrawal of the favor."

"There have been some things in your behavior that I also have been astonished at; for instance, your interference with Miss Macrae."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say. You have been trying to steal Miss Macrae's affection from me by your blandishments and cajoleries. I have watched you. I told you I was engaged to her, and yet you go on interfering."

"I was not aware that a woman's love could be stolen. And if I could steal it, I wouldn't have it. You do Miss Macrae, as well as myself, great injustice; and although it is not my way to speak of things so strictly personal, I will, under the circumstances, tell you a fact which may convince you of the foolishness of your accusation. I was engaged to another lady before I ever had the pleasure of meeting Miss Macrae."

"A Glasgow lady?"

"No; a foreigner."

"Oh—h—h! I heard about that from Will Gilbraith—an Italian singer—he said you were crazy about her."

"Will Gilbraith has my permission to talk

about his own love affairs," said Alan in a passion that was entirely assumed, but which effectively put an end to a very delicate catechism. "If Seaford is at Forfar Lodge," he continued, "I will go and see him. I will return home at once and prepare for the visit."

Then Shaw became conciliating. He considered that Alan would probably be three days from home, during which time Flora and Fame would be dependent on his society. The opportunity was too promising to be thrown away for a few soft words, so he put the note back in his pocket-book, saying, "I do not wish to annoy you unnecessarily, Alan. But I really want the money, and I should judge, from what I saw of Seaford, that he has plenty of cash to pay his debts. At any rate, I will give you a week to see what you can do with him."

"Thank you! I will do the best I can, and that as soon as possible."

Then Alan returned to Dunbrack, dressed himself for the long ride, and with some plausible story of an invitation just received from Seaford, started on his disagreeable journey. He was very angry at Shaw's violation of his promise, and understood that he had practically sent him out of his way. But it was one of those wrongs that prudence counsels patience for; and he reflected as he rode drearily over the hills that

all the world pursue their own interests at their neighbor's charges, and that nobody is pleased but somebody complains of it.

"He will be at Dunbrack as soon as he thinks I am half a mile away, and will very likely tell them I asked him to take my place. He is quite capable of the lie." This was not the worst of Alan's reflections; he had the feeling that he was going on a fool's errand—Seaford might have been there, and left; or he might never have been there; or if there, he might be unable to pay him. Men did not usually carry three hundred pounds in their pockets; and then he turned heartsick as he asked himself, "If any of these things happen what am I to do?"

He had not settled that question when he reached Forfar Lodge. He found Seaford there, but he was as poor as he had been when he borrowed the money; and he was quite displeased at being "dunned for a paltry three hundred pounds," which, he reminded Alan, had been "voluntarily loaned him without any set time for repayment." And Alan knew this statement was correct. It was really the price he had paid for his introduction to the fashionable club and set to which Seaford belonged; and he felt acutely the meanness of the position in which he had been compelled to place himself.

And Seaford's attitude evidently set his stand-

ing and welcome at the Forfar's. He was certainly treated with courtesy, but that was a poor thing in comparison with the hearty greeting that generally awaited his visits. The men were not of his caste; they were of the army or the nobility, and did not think much of the son of a provost of Glasgow. The women looked more favorable on the handsome young man, but that did not increase his popularity with the male element; and throughout all there was an atmosphere which quite prevented him from doing himself justice. He was mortified at his social failure and bitterly annoyed at the offended manner in which Seaford had taken his "dunning;" and he realized that night the folly of lending money—he had lost his three hundred pounds and also the friendship he had thought to buy with them.

One night in such unsympathetic quarters was quite plenty for Alan, and though the morning brought every indication of a severe storm, he would not accept the civility which thought "he had better remain under cover." On the contrary, he was glad to get from under the Forfar roof and among the hills. The rain and the wind suited his angry, chagrined mood. It was not more against him than his friends had been. Shaw had designedly sent him to meet the cool civility of the Forfars and the lordly

disdain of Seaford. And he readily imagined the kind of conversation which was really taking place among the men in the smoking-room.

"I owe the fellow three hundred pounds, and he is cad enough to follow me about the Highlands for it—the trading instinct; hereditary, I suppose. His father has made a pot of money."

"I suppose," drawled Lord Cupar, "he thought it would be a good opportunity to get in with *us*."

Then the company included in "*us*" laughed, and Seaford felt that he owed nothing to himself, and was indeed rather admired for being able to get three hundred pounds out of a provost's son.

Before noon the storm had become furious; trees were crashing around him, his horse could scarcely keep his feet, and he himself found it difficult to keep his saddle. The wind seemed to blow from every quarter, and he was the solitary human figure in miles of hurricane; while every mile that brought him nearer to the seacoast brought him closer to the heart of the tempest. As the day progressed the pouring rain made the streams he had to cross formidable; the smaller bridges began to give way, and he knew that it was impossible for him to proceed much farther. Fortunately, there was a

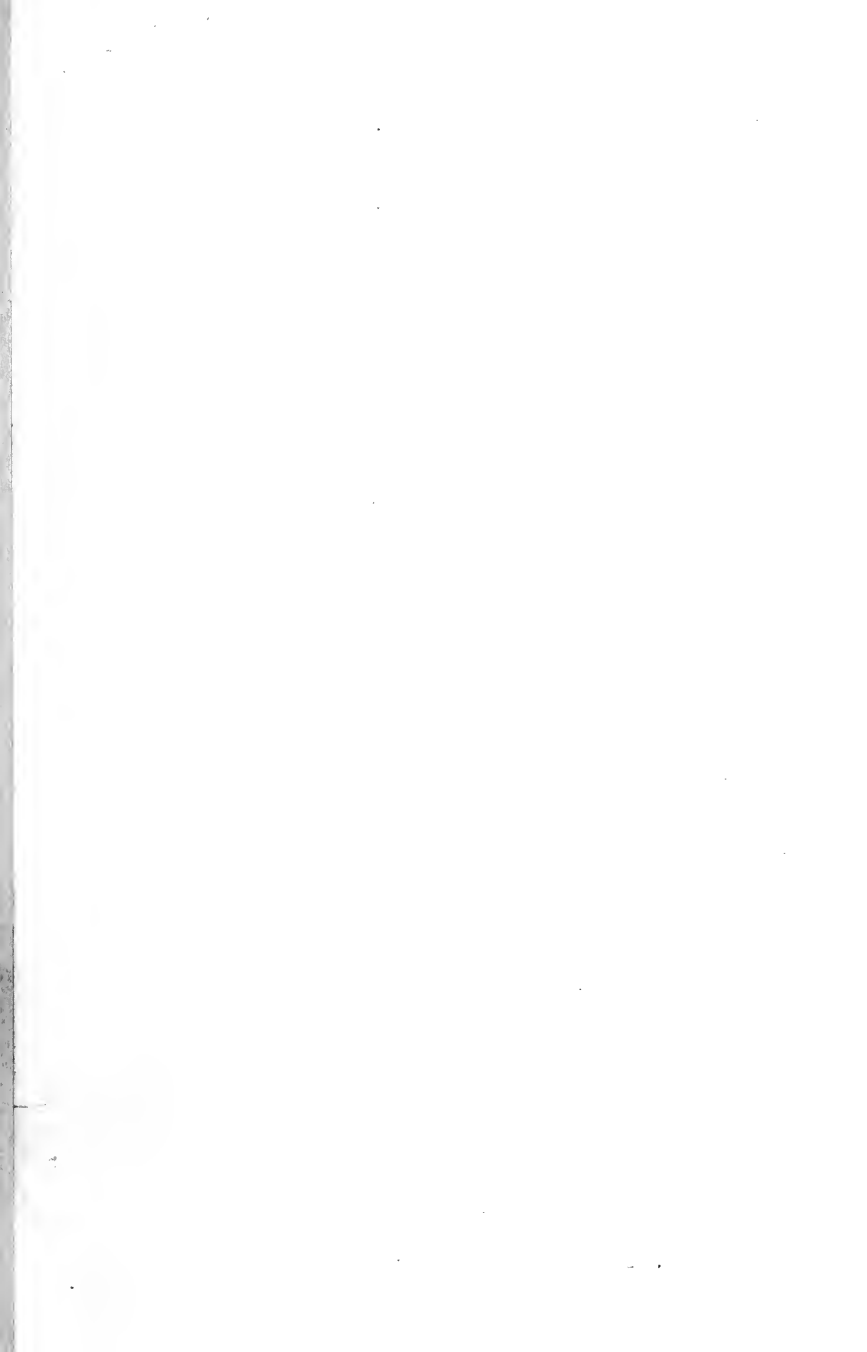
small inn at no great distance, yet it was only by braving constant dangers from falling timber and rising water that he finally reached its shelter.

He had come half the distance, and he hoped the storm would spend itself during the night, and allow him to resume his journey on the morning of the following day. But it was afternoon before he could venture to do so, and even then it was in defiance of the innkeeper's urgent persuasions not to attempt it. He was "sure that the bridges were down, or unsafe—the flooded streams running deep and rapidly—and the rain still heavy on the seaboard."

But these things were as nothing compared with the stress and hurry in Alan's mind. There was now before him such an urgent necessity for the two hundred pounds due to Shaw McDuff that he could think of nothing else, and every moment of delay produced in him a kind of sick impatience. Black clouds trailed across the pale sky, and the ceaseless rain swept in impetuous bursts before blasts of lamentable wind. The storm-beat and storm-felled trees were full of menace; and where the hills were open they were blind with streaming rain. But Alan pushed doggedly on, showing, even in such perseverance, a strength of will in resolve that he was not himself conscious of.



"THE CEASELESS RAIN SWEEPED IN IMPETUOUS BURSTS."



When the sun set there was only the faintest twilight, and the sound of turbulent water-courses troubled the night on every side. He remembered then that about a mile from Dunbrack there was a mountain brook always dangerous after a severe rain-storm, and that if the bridge over the brook had been carried away, he would be compelled to retrace his steps for two miles and take the longer route. At the turning place he hesitated; prudence suggested that he had better select the sure road at first; but he was exceeding weary, and the element of "trusting to luck," which was a pronounced feature in his character, decided him to try the nearest way home. Besides, this was the very brook over whose placid, silvery waters he had received Flora's promise of love, and he would not believe it could now hold any threat for him.

When he reached the spot it was nearly dark, and he cautiously felt his way down the slight incline which led to the bridge. It was still there; his horse's fore feet were upon it; he struck the topmost railing with his whip. Then a wild, piercing call arrested him:

"Master Alan, go back! Go back! The bridge is down in the middle!"

"Is that you, Earne?" he asked; for he knew Earne's voice, and in the clearer light of the space at the bridge entrance he saw Earne dis-

tinctly enough. "Can I not cross, Earne?" he cried.

"Go back, sir, or you will be drowned!"

"Thank you for the warning, Earne; I will remember this kindness." To these words there was no reply, but he saw Earne take the road toward the parting of the paths, and he retraced his steps, expecting to join him where the two ways met. But he did not, and after waiting a few minutes he hastened home as quickly as possible.

His arrival at Dunbrack made a sensation. No one had imagined it possible for a horseman to take the journey in such weather; and at the very moment he entered the dining-room they were wondering how he was spending the time at Forfar Lodge. The family were at dinner, and Alan quickly took his place among them. He was much exhausted and very hungry, and exceedingly glad to be at home and with his kindred again.

"Indeed," he said with a glow of honest gratitude, "I never should have been here any more in this body but for the love of Earne Macrae. I was just going to cross the bridge at the Deer Pass when he called to me that it was down in the middle, and that if I attempted to cross—"

At this point Alan noticed that every one was looking at him with faces full of amazement and

terror; that his mother uttered some excited exclamation, while his father asked in a voice of wondering awe:

"Who warned you of the broken bridge?"

"Earne."

"Impossible!"

"It was Earne. I am sure of that."

"Did you see him?"

"Yes. I could not mistake his figure and the way in which he lifted his cap as he called above the blast, '*Master Alan, go back! Go back! The bridge is down in the middle!*' Besides, I should know Earne's voice under all circumstances. I am as sure it was Earne as I am of my own identity. It was just like Earne, also, to watch for me and warn me. Why do you doubt it?"

"*Earne is dead!* He was drowned yesterday. The Lapwing went to the bottom, and Earne with her."

For a moment Alan looked at his father, wondering, scarce believing, then his hands fell, he grew white as death, and before any one could reach him fell forward, senseless. And when after long efforts he was restored to consciousness, he came back with such passionate grief as smote every one that heard him with a sense of more than mortal sorrow.

"Oh, Earne! Earne!" he cried, "you said you would repay me. Living or dead, you said you

would repay me! Oh, my brother! my brother Earne!"

They comforted and nourished and wept with him, and talked long over the circumstance; and finally Alan was strangely lifted up by the knowledge of such faithful love beyond the depths of the ocean, beyond the shore and shoal of this life; and when he was alone in the night he called Earne by name, and was answered. For if we truly call, we shall be heard; and if we listen, we shall hear.

CHAPTER VIII.

LIKE AS A FATHER PITIETH HIS CHILDREN.

WHEN Alan awoke the next morning his sorrow and anxiety quickly found him out. Earne's death, the loss of his boat, the two hundred pounds he must get without delay, and at any cost—and the urgency of the last dilemma made it the foremost of his deliberations. His thoughts of help naturally went first to his mother; but though he knew her heart would never fail him, he also knew that she never had any money either to lend or to give. It was one of her small, prideful peculiarities to boast that "she couldn't distract herself with the purse; she looked well after the meat, and the provost, honest man! looked well after the money; never asking the price of anything, but writing a bit paper that settled all things."

Alan had heard his mother utter such sentiments a thousand times, and had found out by experience that she always had the will, but never the cash to help his necessities. And he knew also that she would not be satisfied with a simple state-

ment of his strait; she would inquire, and argue, and suppose, and advise, and talk over the matter, until, somehow or other, it would permeate the whole house.

Well, then, there was Jessie. Jessie always had money. She had received from her father at least two extraordinary supplies, and he had no doubt that she could easily let him have the amount—if she would. So, soon after breakfast, he sought his sister. She was in one of the upper chambers used as a guest room, and there were fourteen large trunks around her. In these she was packing her fine napery, her bridal presents, and her new clothing, making a careful inventory of the contents of each trunk as her orderly hands filled them. As Alan entered she looked up from her list of damask table napkins and asked fretfully:

“What *do* you want, Alan?” laying that special stress on the word ‘do’ which fully indicated her annoyance at being disturbed in work so congenial and important.

“Give me a few minutes, Jessie. I want to ask you a favor.”

“Now, Alan, if you want any more invitations to my marriage, I tell you that I cannot give them. James says, very truly, that it is no one’s affair but our own.”

“It is not that, Jessie. I want you to lend me two hundred pounds.”

Like as a Father Pitieth his Children 199

"Two hundred pounds! You must be crazy, Alan!"

"I know you have the money, Jessie. Lend it to me; I am in a great strait."

"But why should I lend it because you are in a great strait? A hundred, a thousand people might say that."

"You have only one brother."

"And I think he is a very selfish, unreasonable brother to come to me *now*, at this important time. A girl on the very verge of matrimony needs all the money she can get. Would you like your sister to go empty-handed into her husband's house?"

"Empty-handed!" and Alan waved his hand over the rows of trunks and piles of damask and said, "You know I shall have my quarter's allowance on the first of October, and then I shall repay you."

"You will do nothing of the kind. It would take the most of it; and I am very sure you have already made other promises for the same time. Why can you not put off till the first of October whoever is now pressing you?"

"I can't, and that is all about it."

"Who is this pressing creditor?"

"Shaw McDuff—the insolent—"

"No bad names, Alan! You have been warned not to trust him often. He is asked to my wed-

ding, and I do hope you will have no quarrel with him."

"He is a—"

"He is a very proper young man. James thought highly of him."

"Jessie, dear Jessie, lend me the money; it will save father, as well as myself, a lot of trouble."

"I think this is shameful, Alan, bringing your anxieties and wants to me at this time, and trying to frighten me, too, about father;" and then she began to whimper a little, and Alan banged the door, and left her to continue counting her napkins and tablecloths in peace.

He felt almost distracted. There seemed now to be no other way but to throw himself on Shaw's mercy; and he went down to the village to seek him. As he approached it, he saw a crowd of men, among whom Shaw appeared to have the authority, going toward the harbor. The pier had been damaged by the storm, and Shaw was dictating what repairs ought to be made, and otherwise exhibiting himself as a man to give orders and have them obeyed. He saw Alan some time before he condescended to notice him, for he knew by his face and carriage that he was coming not to pay money, but to ask a favor; and it was with an air of preoccupation and annoyance that he at last granted Alan's request for a few minutes' conversation.

"We have had quite a misfortune," he said, with an expression of worry; "the pier is much damaged. It will take two or three hundred pounds to repair it; and the village looks to the McDuffs for everything. Did you find Seaford at Forfar Lodge?"

"Yes, but he could not pay me. Indeed, he was offended at my request for payment at a time when, he said, I knew gentlemen had no leisure to think of anything but sport."

"If he owes you money he ought to have found leisure to pay it. He is a gentleman, and I think would have done so."

"Do you mean to say I am telling you a man owes me money when he does not owe it? Here is Seaford's last letter; read it."

"No; I will take your word, of course. But I say Seaford's behavior is dishonorable. Gentlemen pay their debts. I never owe a penny beyond its due time."

"Well, Shaw, you are a phenomenal character in that way. I asked my sister this morning to loan me the money, and she would not."

"I have no doubt she was quite justified in her refusal. She is marrying a poor man also; but if your sister cannot trust you, why should you expect me to do so?"

"Well, Shaw, there are good reasons for expecting it. I have heard at Forfar's that you

bought the Lapwing from Lord Reay for four hundred pounds, and I have already paid you six hundred. I think you might wait until the first of October for the other two hundred. You know, also, that the boat has gone to the bottom, the—”

“That by visitation of God; and no wonder, with such a rascal as Earne Macrae on board her. It was worth losing the boat to lose the man.”

“Shaw, I wish both you and myself were worthy to be named with Earne Macrae. He was the finest gentleman I ever knew, and as he may now be in the very presence of God, I would fear to slander him if I were you.”

“Your remarks are insulting; and if it was not for the respect I have for other members of your family I would—”

“No threats, Shaw McDuff! Two can play at that game; and if I make a threat I am apt to make it good.”

“Make your promise to pay me good; that is as much as I expect from you. If you cannot do so, I will come up to Dunbrack to-morrow and ask Provost Mackenzie for the money. As to what I paid for the Lapwing that is none of your business. But I will tell you how you may extend your credit with me until October.”

“Well, then, how?”

“If you will promise me during the interval not

to speak to Miss Macrae, or to take the least notice of her in any respect, I will promise you not to ask for my money until the seventh of October."

"What have I ever done or said that could lead you to think me the unspeakable scoundrel your proposal intimates? I promise you that I will speak to Miss Macrae whenever and wherever I have an opportunity to do so. I am going to see her now."

"Then I shall see your father early to-morrow—perhaps to-night—if I find time to leave my duties in the village. It is my opinion the provost will be very much astonished, if not very angry, at the note I hold against Robert Mackenzie and Company. Yes, sir! It is my opinion that this note is one of false pretences. I am doubting absolutely your interest in the company—"

Then Alan, laughing scornfully in his enemy's face, turned on his heel, and went without any hesitation straight to Macrae's house. He went there to anger Shaw. He knew that Macrae and his father had gone to a point some miles up the coast, where it was thought the tide would cast up Earne's body. And he was not particularly wishful to see Fame at that time; at least, not until she came with love-lit eyes and sorrowful face to meet him, and grieve with him, over the loss of Earne

and the boat. Then the temptation to linger beside her was very great; yet, much to Fame's astonishment, he did not remain with her many minutes; he said he had some very important business to attend to, and the girl felt his anxiety and worry, and knew that he had told her the truth.

When he reached Dunbrack he had come to the conclusion to leave a letter for his father, and go himself to Glasgow, and so let the storm break in his absence; for he knew, being absent, his mother, perhaps even Jessie and Flora, would make all possible excuses for him. Jessie, indeed, would not like a family disruption at the time of her marriage; and therefore he could safely count on her influence.

But he was a thoroughly wretched man, and his miserable face and restless, desponding attitude were quickly noticed by Flora. She laid down her book and went to meet him. Her loveliness, her sympathy, her sweet confidence, brought tears to his eyes, and he tried to force the smile with which he always met her. But he could not, and Flora saw it.

"My dear Alan," she said, "how unhappy you are! I saw at breakfast that you could hardly swallow. Alan, dear, what is it? Not your boat?"

"No."

"Nor Earne?"

"No. It is well with Earne."

"Is it money?"

"Yes."

"And Shaw McDuff?"

"Yes."

"I thought so. Now, love, having told me this much, I expect you, I beg you, to tell me all—everything. Perhaps I can help you."

"You will blame me too much; and, oh, Flora, how can I bear that?"

"I will not blame you."

"You will cast me off!"

"I will draw you closer to me. I love you, Alan, not because I ever thought you without faults; I love you faults and all. I have plenty of faults also—bad temper and what not. Let me share your anxiety, whatever it is. You say it is money and Shaw McDuff; any evil thing could come from money and Shaw McDuff."

"Well, Flora, you know that I bought the Lapwing for eight hundred pounds; and I showed you the generous, affectionate letter which father wrote me at the time. He thought that I paid Shaw the whole sum. I did not."

"Why not, dear?"

"I owed in Glasgow a bill of two hundred pounds, and it was likely to give me trouble—the man needed the money. So I paid Shaw six hundred pounds, and promised the balance on the fif-

teenth of August. I expected before that time to receive a large sum I loaned Harry Seaford last April. But Seaford did not pay me, and Shaw said I was not to worry about it; that if I paid him before we left Dunbrack it was all he desired. So I took no care on the matter until he suddenly, two days ago, demanded his money with a threat to ask father for it."

"And is that threat so very terrible?"

"It is far more terrible than you think. In the first place, I promised father never to loan money again, either in the way of friendship or business. I made him a positive promise on this subject, and then in a moment of foolish pride—just to show Seaford I could loan three hundred pounds—I parted with my whole quarter's allowance, ruined my credit, got myself lots of annoyance and worry, and gained nothing but an invitation to lunch with Seaford at his club."

"Then, it was to try and get this money you went to Forfar?"

"Yes; and Seaford treated me insolently; somehow, he made me feel as if I was a consummate cad in asking for it. I never had a more painful social experience. But I deserved it for breaking my promise to father. All he said to me about the folly and misery of lending money has come true."

"Well, Alan, the case is, of course, bad enough; but I am sure it is not beyond your father's help and forgiveness. Go to him at once and do not make yourself ill over what can be remedied."

"If I could get the money from any one else I would far rather do so. I cannot bear to shadow father's last days of rest. He has been so happy here, I cannot tell him of my unfaithfulness. I asked Jessie to let me have two hundred pounds until the first of October, but she would not."

"How could she refuse you! I know she has the money. If I had it, I should be the happiest girl in the world to let you use it for so kind and thoughtful a purpose; but I have only seventy-five pounds a quarter, and I spent nearly every pound of my last allowance in buying wedding presents for Jessie. But I do not think uncle will be very hard on you."

"Oh, Flora, I have the worst part to tell you. I gave Shaw a note on Robert Mackenzie and Company, and that is a thing I ought not to have done—a thing which I solemnly promised father I never, never would do again."

"You had done it before?"

"Once."

"And it is a wrong thing to do?"

"Yes, a—a—a dishonorable thing."

"I see. You have no money in Robert Mackenzie and Company's business?"

"Not a penny."

"You drew a bill, then, on your father's love, and not on your own resources?"

"That is what I did."

"Why did you do it?"

"Foolish pride again, Flora. I wanted Shaw to think I did have an interest in my father's business—that I was the 'company' of the concern. He thought so at the time, but this morning he taunted me with the circumstance, and really accused me of giving a note under false pretences."

"What did you answer?"

"Not a word. I left him."

"I am glad of that. Alan, let me go and tell your father. It will be hard for you to make such a confession, and I can say more for you than you dare to say for yourself. I have no fear of Uncle Robert. I cannot lend you the money, but I am sure I can put this wretched affair all right. May I try?"

"I am so miserable! I am so utterly miserable! so ashamed of myself! Oh, Flora, if you could only feel for one moment the agony this confession causes me—the agony I have felt for two long dreadful days and nights!"

"My dear Alan, if you are between two evils, it is wise and right to choose the least. Is it not bet-

ter to trust your father's love than ask Shaw McDuff for his scornful pity or forbearance? He will constantly make you feel your position. Go to your father and you may laugh at your enemy. Or, may I go for you? Let me go."

After much persuasion Alan agreed to trust the wretched business to Flora's intercession, and they sat and talked over the circumstance in every possible light until summoned to lunch. Mackenzie had not returned, and Alan's and Flora's anxiety lest Shaw should interview him before matters could be explained was so great that neither of them could eat. In fact, Alan looked so ill that Mrs. Mackenzie was alarmed and sure that he was on the verge of a serious sickness. Jessie understood the reason of his pallor and loss of appetite, but she kept her own counsel. She was sorry for her brother, but she knew that he generally found a way out of his financial troubles, and she was certain it was only one of Alan's chronic embarrassments. It was too near her wedding to sanction or induce family differences, and she made Alan understand that he had nothing to fear from her speaking of his money perplexities.

He was not grateful for this assurance, and with some offence Jessie told him so; but the young man was indifferent; his anxiety swallowed up all other feelings. The one cry in his heart was, "Oh, God, that it were possible to undo

things done!" And it did not at this hour comfort him to remember the great saying that Flora had urged upon him as full compensation for his failure to hide his fault, "*Woe unto those whose sins are successful!*" He thought really it would have been better if, this time, at any rate, his sin had been successfully carried through.

And as trouble is great or little by comparison, he felt that if he could only know surely that his father had returned home unaware of his wrongdoing—if Flora or himself might be the one to confess it—the shame and sorrow would be more bearable. The very idea of Shaw presenting the note to his father made him heart-sick. How could he bear it? All the energy of his hopes and despair and passionate longing was set to this one desire—that no stranger might become his accuser, and of all strangers not Shaw! Oh, not Shaw! He thought he could endure any other form this evil might take.

After three hours of such misery as turns the hair gray, Flora came to tell him that the provost had returned home. He could not form the question which his eyes asked her, and she made haste to add: "I am sure he has not seen Shaw. He is troubled about Earne; they have not found his body. As soon as he has eaten let me speak to him, Alan. He will go into the garden with his cigar, and I will follow him."

He nodded sadly and cast down his eyes, and she understood that it was best to leave him alone. The misery he was suffering was salutary; she did not wish to make it less, but if it could be shortened, how glad she would be! And at this hour she never once asked herself what effect the discovery of her lover's moral weakness would have on her affection for him. She loved Alan, she saw him suffering, and the only idea that possessed her was to obtain some relief for his suffering as quickly as possible.

Every moment that the provost sat leisurely eating and talking of poor Earne and Macrae seemed interminable to her. Never before had he so loitered and lingered over a dinner plate; and if Shaw should come while he was sitting there! The contingency made her quiver. She could have cried out aloud against it. The lighting of the provost's cigar and his aimless saunter about the dining-room, talking of the storm and its ravages, was the acme of the unconscious man's unreasonableness to poor Flora's excited feelings. Never before had he been so slow and loitering. She could finally endure the delay no longer, for she heard some movement of horse's feet in the courtyard. It might be Shaw!

"Dear Uncle Robert," she said, "do come into the garden to smoke. I want to talk to you. I have something very particular to say."

"I am a little tired to-day, Flora," he answered, "but I cannot refuse my little lassie's request, particularly as she hardly ever asks me to do anything to pleasure her. I will come, dear; certainly I will come." He was putting on his cap as he said these words, and the next moment they were walking down the broad-flagged avenue that led among the boxwood to the hazel lane. She took him in this direction purposely; she wished Alan to see that, so far at least, Shaw had not interfered with his right to confession.

"What is it, my dear, you wish to say to me?" asked the provost. "There is to be a wedding; is it money?"

"Oh, no, uncle. It is something much more precious than money; it is love I want; love so noble, so heavenly, that it must come from God's heart straight into your heart; and I think it is already there—already waiting for the one who wants it."

The provost partly understood at once. A feeling of mingled anger and sadness assailed him even before he could conjecture a cause for it. He looked down into the lovely, anxious face at his side, and asked almost in a whisper:

"Is it Alan?"

"Yes, sir. He is breaking his heart for having disobeyed you. I cannot bear to see his misery—for I love him. I love him dearly."

"He is not worthy of such love, I fear."

"Which of us is worthy of love?"

"Tell me all, Flora. Hide nothing. Let me know the worst."

And Flora obeyed the request. She told the story with bitter tears, with sweet little pleas and apologies, with a final reminder that Alan was here for a purchase, and that she longed to help him "buy the truth" he had been sent to buy. "He is paying tears and heart-sorrow at this moment," she added; "but that is not enough; we must throw love into the balance."

As she spoke the provost leaned against a large birch tree and threw his cigar away. Every force in his nature was needed for the struggle within him. And sweet, and clear, and not to be misunderstood three lines he had read—he knew not where—went singing, singing, singing through his soul:

"Through sins of sense, perversities of will,
Through doubt and pain, through guilt and shame and ill,
Thy pitying Eye is on thy creature still."

And as Flora stood silently watching, and he stood silently listening, there came to him that one wondrous glance of God, that touch of His pitying love, that so enlarges the human heart that it can deny all, and part with all, so that it may do the will of the Father in heaven. And he said softly

to Flora, "Where is Alan, my dear?" and she answered, "He is in the large parlor;" and he said then, "Come, let us go to him."

They went back to the house without a word more, and Flora gently opened the door of the room in which Alan was waiting the result of her intercession. And the young man was in a deep sleep. Exhausted by mental suffering, he had thrown himself on the sofa, and his angel had understood that "it was enough," and had given unto him the most refreshing cup that mortality can drink of. They watched him a few moments and then Flora went away; she wished every one to know that Alan was asleep and must not be awakened; and thus she provided the privacy necessary for the meeting between father and son.

The handsome face of Alan was calm as that of a sleeping babe, and only his pallor and deep unconsciousness told of the terrible strain through which he had passed. And his father sat motionless watching him, his heart full of that love which God calls "the fulfilling of the law." Then thoughts beyond his own thoughts were given him, and he comprehended the divine justice—that large, benignant justice which, seeing all and understanding all, excuses, acquits, and pardons without anger and without reproach.

In about half an hour Alan awoke; wide awake, as one who suddenly recalls something important.

And his father stood up and looked at him. Then a single word bridged the space between them:

"Father!"

The next moment the provost had seated himself by his erring son; and words not to be interpreted, tears that angels witnessed, explained all and forgave all. It was the experience of a moment, as all such experiences—if they be vital and soulful—must be. For between the sinner and the one sinned against there is a great gulf which must be passed at a bound, if it is to be passed at all. No explanations come *before* such God-like pardon; love forgives all before it knows all; it restores to favor before it asks for submission.

Alan's head was on his father's shoulder, his hand in his father's hand, as he told frankly and without reserve the faults which disobedience and vanity had led him into. And the provost understood how easily the entanglement had come; he divined the man Seaford, and how he had played upon his son's youthful egotisms and social aspirations. He read as in a book the selfish cunning of Shaw McDuff in flattering Alan into a disgraceful contract, and then wounding and insulting him in every way that his envy and jealousy could dictate. He let Alan empty his heart of all its sorrow and shame, and then said:

"You must keep a sturdy porter before the door of your life, Alan, in the future—one that will not

open to every comer. I thought you would learn up here how much grander and sweeter is nature's companionship than the restless, feverish contact of cities and mankind. I see that I have been wrong. I know now that you are here to fight the battle of life and not to shirk it. But even your humiliating experience has its lesson; learn from it that in certain cases money demoralizes even the giver or the lender. Both you and Seaford are the worse for that unfortunate loan, and instead of breeding kindness it has bred contempt and dislike. Now I want you to face the world, to share in the work of the world, to learn your weak points, and grow strong in conquering them."

"I desire with all my heart to do right, father, but the moment I am in temptation I fall."

"That is a common experience, Alan. The flesh striveth against the spirit; but remember, also, that the spirit striveth against the flesh; and the spirit, being in contact with God, is far the mightier. You have, then, the spirit to help all your infirmities if you ask for its help. I am going to send you to London to take charge of the business there. You will consult with James Crawford about the office, and Hill and Hislop will give you all the necessary legal counsel. I shall put honor and credit in your power, and expect you to realize them. I believe you will."

"I will try to do so, father—I will indeed!"

"I trust you; the more so that I see one of the sweetest and loveliest of women trusts you also. I think it is a good sign for your future that Flora is willing to share it with you. And I am not insensible to the restraint you have both shown in keeping your engagement secret until a fitting time came for its disclosure. But now, Alan, you must earn the right to Flora's esteem before you ask for her public avowal of it. Tell her what I propose, and promise her to come in one year with an honorable, untarnished record and ask for her hand."

"My good father! I will do all you advise."

"Now, my dear son, 'die that you may be born.' This is the great secret, Alan, of the soul's passage through earth life. Or, as the Divine One said, 'Let the dead past bury its dead.' As far as I am concerned, this past of yours is buried. Smile and be happy. When Shaw McDuff comes to make trouble he will find his occupation gone. All you have to do is to

"Stand up in virtue of holy pain,
And guard you well from guilt again.'"

Then they went out of the parlor together, and Flora, watching anxiously for the result of the meeting, saw them pass through the hall, their faces calm and happy, and the father's arm thrown affectionately across his son's shoulder. How de-

lighted she was! She had been walking anxiously about the upper corridor, and at every movement looking over the balusters to see if there was a sign of reconciliation. And when her hope was realized, and the two men so lovingly linked passed under her vision, she fled to her room smiling, and sat down to let the clouds of care and fear blow off her soul.

"It is all right, dear," she said to her favorite picture. "It is all love, dear; and I think I know how the angels feel when they have made happiness. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. Is not that a wonderful thing, Lady Sara? Were you ever a peacemaker? My poor dear, you lived in times of hatred and war, how could you know the joy that I now feel?"

In a little while she began to dress herself beautifully for the evening meal. She wished Alan to see that she thought him well worth her waving hair and prettiest blue silk robe, with its soft lace and pale ribbons. And she brought from her room a joyous temper so catching that even Jessie, worried and wearied with her day's work and her inabilities, felt its influence and said cheerfully:

"How lovely you are to-night, Flora! You look so joyous; what good thing has come to you?"

"I am joyous," she answered; but neither of the

two women understood yet that the springs of outward joy lie deep within; that only strong hearts are joyous hearts, nimble, sure of themselves through all trials; gay, smiling with immortality.

Alan also had dressed himself with unusual care. He had never under any circumstances looked handsomer. And when Flora entered the room he was there to meet her; to say with love's sweet glances and kisses what words could not stumble over. He told her he thought himself the most fortunate of mortal men, and Flora said he made her the happiest of mortal women. Then Jessie and Mr. Mackenzie entered, and Jessie, feeling the bright atmosphere, explained it to herself by the remark, "How lovely you are to-night, Flora!" And then Mrs. Mackenzie looked with a careful, kindly criticism at the girl and asked:

"What is the matter with you, lassie? You are the very portrait of happiness. You are as gay as a lark and as fresh as a new-blown daisy."

And ere the words were finished in rushed Fame, the odor of the forest and the breath of the sea all about her. She had on a bright scarlet gown, making her bewildering beauty, her arch, dreamy, incalculable nature remarkably obvious. She filled the room with her magnetic charm, so that even her father, who accompanied her, seemed to become a part of her personality. Whence had

come this girl's spirit? On its way it had possessed itself of singular traits.

Mackenzie was much delighted to see his friend. He put him at his right hand, and the dinner became a festival. But all through it the watchful father was very mindful of his son. He continually appealed to him; he delighted in honoring and praising him; he half offended Jessie by his demonstrative affection. But she said to herself, "It is just the Great Parable over again. Alan has gone to his father—as I advised him to do—and father is killing the fatted calf about the matter. I wish James was here. I think he would say I had done right."

Dinner was nearly finished—in fact, Alan and Flora and Fame were cracking walnuts, and many a little quip and joke with them—when Shaw McDuff entered. He had plenty of time to notice Alan sitting between the two girls, the three heads almost touching in merry rivalry to obtain some singularly large and peculiarly formed nut. Mrs. Mackenzie and Jessie were making coffee, and the provost and his friend discussing the best kind of boat for Hebridean waters. Every one appeared to be so perfectly happy, and yet without his company, that Shaw was annoyed and offended by this lack of interest, after so many weeks' experience of his social value. He bowed and said he had supposed dinner would have been over; and

Like as a Father Pitieth his Children 221

Mrs. Mackenzie and Jessie made much of him, while Alan and the girls went on with their mimic struggle, and Macrae looked steadily out of the window as if lost in thought. Then the provost rose, saying:

"What can I do for you, Mr. McDuff? I have your message about business."

"Perhaps, sir, if we went into a private room it might be better."

"Not at all. You cannot possibly have any business with me that my family may not hear and share."

"That is not certain. I think that your son would prefer that our business was private."

"Nothing of the kind," replied Alan, looking up, but still keeping Fame's right hand, which held the disputed nut. "Whatever you have to say to my father, Shaw, you can say right here and right now."

"Oh, indeed! You have changed your opinion since morning; *then* you did not wish your father to know the business I come here about."

Alan did not answer; he resumed his contest for the nut, and Fame passed it to Flora, and there was so much quiet mirth that Shaw could endure his position no longer, and he said bluntly, taking the note from his pocket:

"Your son is owing me money, sir—money that ought to have been paid on the fifteenth

of last month; and I am not trusting him any longer."

"But this note is drawn on Robert Mackenzie and Company."

"That is the question, sir. It is drawn, as I believe, on—"

"It is drawn upon Robert Mackenzie and Company, and should have been presented for payment at the proper time."

"Your son was afraid of my presenting it to you."

"I think not," said the provost. "Alan is a little extravagant, but he knows Robert Mackenzie and Company will honor his demands. Sit down until I draw a check; it will only take me a few minutes. Alan tells me it is the balance on the Lapwing. Permit me to say that one hundred per cent. profit is not a lawful, let alone a friendly transaction."

"Permit me to say, sir, that there is nothing unlawful in the transaction, and that it was a business proceeding, and not an affair of friendship."

Then the provost left the room, and Macrae neither moved nor spoke, but Alan and the girls continued their daffing in a sort of subdued, whispering manner particularly offensive to the jealous McDuff; while Jessie's little civilities and Mrs. Mackenzie's offer of a cup of coffee did not make more endurable the neglect and constraint of the situation. It was the indifference that hurt Shaw.

Like as a Father Pitieth his Children 223

When Alan left the table and threw himself into the particularly delightful lounging chair Shaw had generally occupied, and Flora and Fame sat down on each side of him, and all the sweet familiarities of their relationship were in evidence, Shaw hated the smiling, happy, rather haughty-looking young man. He was sure he had told some plausible, untruthful version of their business with each other; and yet he perceived plainly that Alan's position was unassailable and that nothing he could say would injure it.

Fame's behavior hurt him most of all. She looked that night, even to his self-admiring eyes, perfectly ravishing; she provoked him with her saucy oblivion of his presence and her piquant advances toward Alan; in fact, no two girls ever tacitly and without premeditation so completely carried out a little drama for idealizing one lover at the expense of the other.

The provost was not absent ten minutes, but it looked an hour to every one in the room but the three players and Macrae. Mrs. Mackenzie was ignorant of Shaw's unkindness to Alan, and felt as if she was encouraging some gross inhospitality. Jessie was still mindful of any vacant place at her wedding breakfast, and not at all sure that Shaw deserved the contemptuous treatment he was receiving; and Macrae, refuging himself in a height above Shaw McDuff's comprehension, had

forgotten his existence. So that it was a relief when the provost returned with a slip of paper in his hand representing two hundred pounds of the Bank of Scotland's issue.

"You will stay and spend the evening with us, Mr. McDuff," said Mrs. Mackenzie. She had an anxious desire to make things more pleasant; and Jessie added her share to this motive by informing Shaw when Mr. Laidlaw was coming. But all such efforts fell unmeaningly into the contradictory atmosphere. Besides, Shaw, glancing at Alan, had met his smiling stare of inquiry and Fame's insolent look of triumphant scorn; and he was not inclined to fight single-handed two men and two women so inimical to him.

"But I have my two hundred pounds," he thought, and he made a little demonstration with the paper in answer to his thought; and then, finding that Mackenzie and Macrae had resumed their conversation as if he was not present, he said in that high-pitched voice which always interpreted his worst temper:

"Provost Mackenzie, I am feeling much obligated to you for honoring what you had no necessity to honor; and—"

"Sir, I always feel it both a necessity and a pleasure to honor my son's drafts."

"Drafts—on your patience and forbearance."

Like as a Father Pitieth his Children 225

"On my purse. Go on, Macrae, I am hearing you—and I am hearing no one but you."

Then Shaw, turning to Alan, said, "Your father has shouldered your discredit, Alan Mackenzie, and paid the money you were owing me; but there is another debt between us, and I will have payment from you only. Don't forget that!"

Fame laughed disdainfully at these words, and said, "You need not remember it a moment, Alan. Shaw McDuff's threats break no bones." And to this contemptuous assertion the young man passed through the door. He clanged it furiously behind him, but did not make noise enough to shut out the taunting laugh of Fame, which rang in his ears all the way down the mountain, filling his heart with an intolerable sense of defeat and disdain.

CHAPTER IX.

MONEY AND MARRIAGE.

THE bridegroom was coming, and Dunbrack Castle put on her festival air to meet him. At the last, Mr. Laidlaw had decided to spend a few days in advance of the ceremony with the family, and every one was glad of it. But the active enmity of Shaw troubled Jessie and Mrs. Mackenzie; they deprecated any overt quarrel entering the household at this time, and Shaw had been a favorite with the minister. Jessie was inclined to throw the whole blame on Alan, but the provost insisted that Shaw himself was alone to blame, and that, furthermore, he thought Shaw McDuff undesirable company for either young men or young women.

"What you say may be true or not true," answered Mrs. Mackenzie, "but Shaw is not a safe man to quarrel with—and that will be seen and heard tell of."

"Buff and nonsense! He cannot fire the heather, my sheep crop, and Macrae has no

occasion to fear him; as for the lassie, Fame, she can take the best of care of herself."

"I may be wrong, but I have heard that the McDuffs hold a tight grip on Macrae's land; if so, neither of the men is liable to let go."

"Macrae is not fearing the McDuffs; and Fame evidently has some secret power over them. She flites and flouts them continually, and dares them to take a step against her father. Forbye, Macrae has sold me Deer Mountain, and he has the money for it; you need not worry about Macrae."

"Indeed, Robert, I think I may begin worrying anent ourselves. What for are you buying a mountain? Is there no other foolish way to fling good money out of your pocket? I have heard tell of many ridic'lus ways of spending siller, but buying a mountain beats them all."

"Marian, when you know more you will speak wiser. Just at this hour you are in the dark, and I am not ready to show you that buying this mountain is a fine investment. There will be a lot of money made out of it; forbye, it lies sib to Dunbrack, was once part of Dunbrack, and is necessary to the estate as a grazing ground, either for sheep or game. I think you may trust me, Marian; it is not my way to spend money foolishly."

"I can trust you fine, Robert. Now I must

go to Jessie; she is like summer lightning this morning—all a-quiver. It is a God's mercy we have only one daughter to marry."

"I am going down to Macrae's, and we are for the hills; but I will be home in time for dinner."

"Now, Robert, don't you be forgetting that promise. James is coming to-night, and he will be expecting you to welcome him on the threshold; and Jessie takes as personal any slight to James."

The provost made the promise again, and then went to his friend with that willing step which is always rapid and cheerful. The gray old house had taken on for him a look of friendliness; its door stood wide open, and the ancient room into which he stepped, though steeped in the personality of the family, seemed pleasant and familiar to him. He was at home in its atmosphere of long-past days; there was a dream in every faded chair for him, and as soon as he entered the place he was insensibly stilled and disposed to silence and reflection.

But this morning the house was invaded by an insurgent and alien spirit; as soon as he entered it he heard Shaw McDuff speaking in the tone of a man who demands or insists. Mackenzie only smiled. He felt sure Macrae had the means in every respect to "best" his enemy; and Fame's

scornful laughter was the answer of a woman defiant and sure of her ability to defy. He opened the door of the inner room and confronted the opposing parties. Macrae smiled and nodded. "Come in, friend," he said; "there is nothing here to hide, nothing to fear, nothing to be ashamed of."

"I think there is a great deal to be ashamed of," said Shaw, turning to Mackenzie. "For two weeks I have come here every day to collect money due to my father. Of course, we hate to foreclose a mortgage on an old friend and neighbor, but—"

"Friend!" said Fame angrily; "pray, who gave the McDuffs permission to call themselves a 'friend' of the Macrae? Neighbor you may be, but that is not our fault; and as for foreclosing the mortgage, you would have done that long ago if foreclosing had been to your interest. I have told you to bring the deed and we would lift the mortgage. Do you think I will suffer my father to pay you a thousand pounds without delivery of the deed? I will not. Bring the paper and you shall have the money."

"That condition is just and right," said the provost. "My friend has money to lift the mortgage, Mr. McDuff; suppose you go home for the paper, and I will remain here and be witness to the payment of the money."

"Then Shaw turned to the door, and Fame opened it with a laugh. "Go get the deed," she said, "and you shall have your money to the last farthing. And then, thank God! we may brush your footsteps forever from our door stone."

"You shall pay for this impertinence—"

"You have already a debt of the same kind against Alan Mackenzie. We shall have to give you long credit; every one knows that you are indifferent to insults, though keen as a sleuth hound after gold. Very well, run for the deed, and you shall have the money it calls for. Make haste, Shaw McDuff; you must have it handy unless the deil has run away with it."

She spoke with such impetuous haste and temper that her father's appealing "*Fame! Fame!*" was quite lost in the passionate tide of her words; and Mackenzie was not disposed to interfere between the beautiful, angry girl and her opponent. And as soon as Shaw had passed beyond the garden gate she turned to the two men with a laugh that was half a sob, exclaiming:

"There, I have had my say!"

"It might have been a dangerous 'say,' Fame. Thank God! I have now the money to cancel both debt and threat."

"I did not know you had the money; but, all the same, you were in no danger. I did not

“speak like a foolish woman; I knew beyond a doubt that McDuff had lost all power over you.”

“I meant to tell you yesterday about the money, Fame, but you were at Dunbrack all day, and this morning Shaw was here as soon as you came from your room. But how could McDuff have lost all power over me?”

“Well, father, I have a confession to make. I told Shaw to go and get the deed; he can never, never get that deed. It is as far beyond him as—well, as I am;” and she looked steadily at Mackenzie as she made this statement, and smiled with delight.

“But I do not understand you, Fame,” said Macrae. “I owe the money, and of course I will pay it.”

“Of course you will pay what you owe, dear father, but I did not know you had the money, and I was not going to have you put out of house and home before Tom and Hector had the thousand pounds here.”

“I have been selling Deer Mountain to our good friend Mackenzie. It belonged at the first to Dunbrack, and the land has only gone to its own. I am a free man once more, Fame; and it is sixteen years I have been in bondage to the McDuffs. Now I am in a strait until the money is paid; yet I suppose it is right to have the deed I made void.”

"The paper is necessary, Macrae," said the provost.

"And the paper is here," said Fame with a sigh of satisfaction. "I am keeping it myself; and it is a long search and a useless search Shaw will be making for it; and if he could be finding it, no good whatever to him."

"How did you get the paper, Fame?" asked Macrae anxiously.

"I was not stealing it, father; it was poor Earne that brought it to me."

"Then Earne was stealing it?"

"Earne was finding it. I will tell you. McDuff met Earne the day after the trial about the nets—Peter McDuff himself—and he said, 'Earne, there will be a warrant here to-night for you. I am going to have Gill McDuff's drowning looked into. I am thinking you murdered him,' frightening the poor boy, of course; but Earne took it for gospel truth, and he got into the big tree that is by Peter's window, and watched the old man. And he saw him looking over a long paper, and was sure it was the warrant. So he waited until he saw where Peter put it; then, when he left the room, it was not troubling Earne in the least to open the drawer and get the paper. He took it to the Lapwing and took the Lapwing out to sea, until he could find out what they were going to do with him; after

which he intended to give the warrant to the fire or the water."

"But no warrant was taken out for Earne that I know of," said Macrae.

"There was no warrant. The paper Earne took was the deed mortgaging our house to Peter McDuff. Poor Earne! He was not long in finding out that the paper was not befriending the Macrae, and he brought it to me the next morning, and said it was about the Macrae's house, and so it was myself that ought to be taking care of it—at least, he brought part of it."

"But, Fame, you ought to have told me this circumstance long ago," said Macrae.

"As I was saying, father, it was only part of the paper. Earne thought it would be best and safest to tear off your name and the McDuff's name and the seals. And when I said, 'Why did you tear away the names, Earne?' he answered, 'It will be a contract with the devil against the Macrae, for those big red seals are the devil's seals; and I put them in the fire; and I put the McDuff's name in the fire with them; but the Macrae's name I did not burn, I am keeping it for myself.' And we made a secret of it, and I promised Earne that I would never, never tell what he had done to his hurt or to the hurt of the Macrae; and he trusted me and believed in

me. And I was glad of the paper, and thanked him fifty times and gave him my hand to kiss, and he was more happy than if he had found a gold mine. And I was happy also; I knew the money would be paid as soon as you could sell land or Hector send the thousand pounds—paper or no paper—and until that day came I had Shaw McDuff at my defiance; and ever since I have been thanking Earne for the comfort he brought me; and if Earne had been alive to-day fire could not have burned this story out of me. No, indeed! The McDuffs are seeking the paper at this moment, no doubt, each one blaming the other; the old man snapping his fingers and muttering Gaelic oaths, and Shaw stamping about in his black rage and cursing in his heart, as if God was not reading the heart and knowing every word a dumb devil says as well as a railing one. It is a very pretty mystery play, father; do take some pleasure out of it."

While they were talking Shaw returned. He said the mortgage had been taken to their lawyer's office; but, he added, "we are wanting the money for investment at once; and the deed can make little difference. The Macrae has been trusted and obliged in various ways for nearly twenty years, and now that it is in his power to oblige us, we feel that he ought to do it."

"Very good, Mr. McDuff," said the provost, "but it is the general practice to secure the void contract upon payment of the sum loaned."

"If the contract should be lost or stolen," said Fame, "you will remember we have offered you the money. You can have no further claim for interest, for the principal is waiting on your delivery of the proper paper."

"Lost or stolen!" exclaimed Shaw, with a sudden apprehension of the truth. "Ah, then, you know it!"

"I do not tell all I know."

"If it has been stolen, Earne Macrae stole it."

"Then it will be at the bottom of the sea. And, pray, what of your one thousand pounds?"

"Earne was always a thief, and you—"

"It is to God that you are now accusing Earne; and God will not be believing you. He knew the heart of the poor fisher, and He is knowing your heart, too, Shaw McDuff—think of that and keep still about Earne Macrae."

Shaw turned from her with an impatient gesture. "Macrae," he said, "you have the money now, and there is no reason why you should not oblige my father by paying it. If you can't trust my father's word and hand, you have your friend Mackenzie here; he can witness the transaction."

"Patience, Shaw! I will pay your father."

"I am not believing you have any money, Macrae," Shaw answered scornfully. "You are as poor as poverty—you have no money!"

"I have five thousand pounds in the Bank of Scotland. I am sorry you are not believing me; and if I were as poor as poverty, I am still a Highland gentleman."

"If you have five thousand pounds and are a Highland gentleman, pay the one thousand pounds you owe the McDuffs. I am not believing you own a penny piece! You are poor as poverty!"

"Shaw, you cannot play either upon my pride or my temper. I will not pay you money because you taunt me. This is my house, allow me to have peace in it."

"It is just as likely our house. If you can pay the mortgage—"

"If you can bring the deed, I can pay the mortgage."

"That is fair and business-like," said Mackenzie. "Mr. McDuff, your position here is both unbusiness-like and ungentlemanly."

"I will make you all sorry and ashamed," cried Shaw.

And Fame answered with a provoking laugh, "Shaw, do not threaten. When you are calm it will make you sick with fright to remember

the threats you made when you were angry. Look to your threats and tie them up, or they will bring you into trouble."

"Miss Macrae, let me remind you that once you were very proud of my attentions to you."

"I tread all such memories under my feet."

"And that your father has had favors from us that ought to make him confounded—"

Then Macrae rose. He was trembling with suppressed passion, and Mackenzie took him aside; but Fame turned on his tormentor like an angry lioness.

"Shaw McDuff," she said, "you slander by nature and by custom, just as ill dogs bark. Nature went about a wicked piece of work when she made a man like you. Go to your own place, you are not worthy to breathe in this house."

"Your ill words will not kill me, Fame, though I dare say you would like to do so."

"I would not. I would think scorn to let out such a contemptible spirit."

"Mr. McDuff, we have no further business at this time," said the provost. "When you bring the paper you will receive your money."

"You have nothing to do with this affair, sir," answered Shaw.

"I have. I am the representative of my friend Macrae." Then he took Macrae's arm, and they went out of the room together.

"They have run away from me," said Shaw scornfully, turning to Fame. "Now," he asked peremptorily, "where is the paper you said had been stolen?"

"I said nothing of the kind. I only 'supposed' it might have been lost or stolen."

"My heart tells me you know all about it."

"Your heart, or what passes for your heart, always told you lies; for instance, when it told you that I was ever proud of your attentions. The very idea!"

"As for Alan Mackenzie—"

"You are hoarse with barking at Alan's good qualities and good fortune."

"Hang Alan Mackenzie!"

"Shaw McDuff first; that would only be the barest justice."

"You shall repent this morning's work."

"When the moon drops millstones."

"You will die for love of me yet."

"I will die for a dog first."

"You think you are wonderfully witty."

"A girl needs all her wit when she is talking with a knave and a fool." And at this moment she had a splendor of beauty that made Shaw's love for her flame like fire. He was silent for a moment, and then he went impetuously to her, put his hand upon her shoulders, and said with uncontrollable emotion:



"HE WENT TO HER AND PUT HIS HAND ON HER SHOULDER."

"Fame! Fame! let all this pass and be forgiven. I love you! I love you to distraction! Love me a little, and I promise you that this thousand pounds shall never more trouble you or your father."

"I am not selling a thousand pounds' worth of my love; and my father wishes to pay what he owes, and I wish him to pay it. A favor from the McDuffs would be a chain round our lives."

"For all that, listen to me. I am in mortal earnest. I love you in spite of all that has come and gone, and you do love me!"

"I do not. I shall never forgive your interference with Gillian Grant—and others also."

At this point Alister Macrae, a young man in the employ of the family, entered the room; he said his chief would be at the house of Peter McDuff the following morning at ten o'clock with witnesses and the money; and "would the young gentleman be civil enough to let the matter drop until that time?" he asked.

While the message was being delivered Fame left the room. She found her father and his friend ready for a walk, and they bid her "put on her hat and they would go with her as far as Dunbrack;" and as she feared another encounter with Shaw, she was glad of the protection of their society. At Dunbrack Fame was very

welcome, there were many little odds and ends to do or to finish, and Jessie was not as practical as usual. How could she be practical when she conceived it to be her duty constantly to remind herself and others that she was spending "the last days of her girlhood"? She had passing fits of sentiment about her "girlhood's days;" all her fourteen trunks were packed and directed to her future residence, and she stood and looked at them, and cried a little, and was very affectionate, and rather wearisome amid all the many duties there were to attend to; the more so, as Mrs. Mackenzie was a little off her serene balance, and worried and fretted, and inwardly dreading the next three days.

However, there was nothing to dread. James Laidlaw was too happy to be captious or even argumentative. He was, indeed, so occupied with his lovely bride that he let assertions and opinions greatly at variance with his own convictions pass without denial or with very short, curt opposition. For Macrae had been talking on his favorite subject, the talk having arisen from his anxiety to pay at once the mortgage on his house. "I want to be feeling the old home my very own," he said. "I might trouble McDuff as he has troubled me, but what would I be gaining? I would rather put him out of the house he has no friends in—dead or alive."

"Do you think, sir," asked Alan, "that souls out of the flesh still take an interest in their old home?"

"Why not?" inquired Macrae. "It is this intuitive feeling that is at the bottom of the popular respect we are all paying to families who have lived for centuries in the same dwelling. Such old houses are knowing their own; and their own are knowing, sweetly and fully, the meaning of the word 'home.' Let us be taking, for example, the Macraes, the Mackenzies, and the Dunbracks. Through bodily processes that have been going on and on and on they have sprung from the Ross land around us. They are all of them sons and daughters of the soil; and there will be a great and inherited sympathy between them and the soil. They are loving well, as they ought to do, the land of their birth."

"Then you think, Ian," asked Mackenzie, "that the reincarnating soul comes back preferably to its own people and place?"

"I think, Robert, that the attractions and relationships which this pronounced element must have upon the spiritual nomad will be considered and not ignored by the infinite wisdom and love which guides that never-resting essence from one carnal experience to another; always willing it onward and upward to Himself."

"Then the Macraes may have come back for many generations to the old gray house on the seashore?"

"They may, every generation stepping a little upward. Fergus Macrae, the first bare-armed thane who led our clan to war and rapine, had many traits that still linger in our family. Thank God! we are different men and women from the wild pagan Macraes of those early centuries, but we are Macraes still."

"Still, sir, reincarnated souls must often go into strange families," said Alan.

"I am not denying that, Alan; but I think they are easily to be known. They have no family tastes or resemblances; they are the black sheep, the genius, the unmanageable member, who runs counter to every family tradition, because their souls have no such traditions. They are in the family, but not of it; and they have come into it because infinite love and wisdom discerned in that special household the conditions necessary for that soul's education or trial or discipline."

"This idea virtually implies the idea of original sin," said Mackenzie.

"Yes; and also of original goodness. Children, as every one knows, are born into this world good as well as evil, clever as well as ignorant. For each soul is coming to reincarnation with

the absolutely just measure of good or evil forces which its previous incarnations have developed. Now, you will be understanding that to have acquired evil tendencies in previous lives is to be born under an evil destiny; and to have acquired good tendencies is to have the happy lot of the writer of the Book of Wisdom, who says of himself, 'Being good, I come into a body undefiled.' "

As this conversation had been progressing, Jessie and Laidlaw joined the group and stood listening. But for once the minister was not eager to deny or controvert. Jessie's sweet loveliness and affection, the happy hopes of their near bridal, with its many considerations, were so vital and so delightful that it was difficult for him to enter into other subjects. He did really feel that for this once love might innocently put aside duty. So when Alan briefly restated Macrae's positions and asked Mr. Laidlaw what he thought of them, the minister answered a little impatiently:

"I consider the whole subject of reincarnation one of God's secrets. He has not revealed it to us in His Word. We have no means of finding out whether or not we have lived before. Morality does not compel us to find it out. It is not possible for us to find it out. We are not to be punished for not finding it out; and I am very

doubtful if it would be lawful to pray that the truth regarding this idea might be revealed to us."

He pronounced these opinions with the positive air of one having authority, and it was beautiful to watch Jessie's admiration. She resolved from that moment never again to inquire into the mysteries of past or future; and she led her beloved away to a quiet corner, where they could discourse of their marriage and of those comfortable, world-like events which are natural to the common tongue of every man.

But it was easy to excuse Laidlaw's dictation at this time; the men smiled at him and at each other; and when he was beyond hearing Macrae said, "We will set down nothing Laidlaw said to-night against him. He is a lover, and a wise lover is just the most foolish of mortals. If he had been in a natural condition, I would have shown him that if reincarnation is the secret of God, it is an open secret to those who have reached a point where they desire to look into it. I would have shown him that His Word is not without revelation on this subject. Robert, Alan, it is the older Scripture written ineffaceably on every soul that comes into this world to be 'continually fashioned,' even while to mortal ken there appears to be no seed of goodness in them."

During this conversation Fame and Flora were in a quiet corner of a small parlor adjoining the dining-room. Both girls were weary and depressed. Flora had been sympathizing continually with Jessie and her "girlhood's days" and her bridal responsibilities, and Fame had torn herself to pieces nervously in her quarrel with Shaw.

"Father is talking of lives before and lives beyond," she said fretfully; "and, goodness knows, one life is hard enough to wear away."

"Don't you believe your father, Fame?"

"Sometimes I know he is right, and then sometimes I think his ideas cannot be universally true; for I am well acquainted with people who are not worthy of one life, let alone many lives. Yes, I am thinking of Shaw McDuff."

"God has infinite patience with such souls, Fame."

"Very good, but I am only Fame Macrae, and I have not infinite patience. But to-morrow! to-morrow! we shall be free of the McDuffs, and then I can say what I like to them and of them."

"I don't think you have suffered much from restraining yourself about them, Fame. I wish Jessie was not so much worried about Shaw's vacant place. I do believe she would gladly welcome him, if uncle would permit him to be present. I cannot understand her; but, then,

human sympathy is so narrow she probably does not understand me."

"Father was saying a few days ago that even such a great man as Thomas Carlyle had little sympathy and still less understanding of other great men. He thought Tennyson and Burns and even Shakespeare would have done better if they had written in prose; and he asked Dickens one day, 'When are ye goin' to do some wark?' "

The next day there was a welcome pause in events. All was ready; the house was decked with heather and asters and the berries of the mystical rowan tree, and the wedding garments to the last bow and comb and pin were laid out. In the morning Mackenzie and Macrae went down to the village and finished "more amicably than previous events foreshadowed" the McDuff affair. Peter offered his hand at the close of the business to Macrae, and after a short, silent struggle with himself Macrae took it. Shaw did not appear, and Shaw was the only discord in Jessie's wedding harmony. The place reserved for him at the bride's breakfast was still empty, and an empty place was said to presage ill fortune.

"Not that I am the least superstitious," Jessie constantly affirmed, "yet I do wish there had been no quarrel with Shaw just at this time. I think it was very thoughtless in Alan." It

fretted her below all her pleasant things and all her happy expectations.

In the afternoon Alan, Flora, and Fame wandered off among the pines. There were many pleasant resting places in their balmly shadows, and they finally sat down on the brown ground and talked in happy, confidential fashion on many subjects. Suddenly they heard a peal of joyous laughter, a rippling, hearty laugh that made Fame draw her brows together and listen with curious intentness. "There is some one in the wood," she said; and they all rose, and as they did so two young men came with swinging steps down the narrow path. Flora stepped aside, Fame blushed and flushed and trembled like a leaf in a high wind, and Alan said in a tone of annoyance:

"It is Harry Seaford."

"And Gillian Grant," added Fame in a whisper to Flora.

The next moment they were standing in a group, laughing, chatting, and holding each other's hands. Seaford was eloquently regretful about Alan's dangerous ride through the storm. He expressed the greatest sorrow at the whole event, and expressed it so well that Alan felt compelled to accept the apology, and, moreover, was pleased to accept it. They sat down again, and for an hour were so happy that Alan, in the

rebound of his anger toward Seaford, and his instant liking for Grant, asked both young men to return to Dunbrack, stay all night, and take part in the wedding festival of the morrow.

Seaford said they were on their way to join Lord Caithness, whose yacht would put into Morandaroch that afternoon for them.

"But," said Grant, "I shall desert Lord Caithness without a scruple. I cannot resist a wedding, and I am delighted at the good fortune that has brought me the invitation."

"Well, then, all the more I must keep our engagement with Caithness," said Seaford; "and I will tell him what an irresistible temptation has found you out, Grant."

"Do so; he would have cast anchor here for a month or two if it had overtaken him. Tell him that."

Then Alan proposed that they should all walk with Seaford to the village, and the offer was enthusiastically accepted. Alan, Flora, and Seaford led the way; Grant and Fame followed—at a rather wide distance—but all were on the little pier as the Caithness yacht came into harbor. Then they went on board and had some refreshments and a very merry time over it, and finally watched the yacht out to sea, Seaford and Caithness standing bareheaded in the sunshine to

receive and return the waving adieus of their late companions.

It was getting near the dinner hour, and they turned homeward. No one had mentioned Shaw, but perhaps all were thinking of him; and thoughts call on events; so, then, it was little wonder that they saw Shaw McDuff coming straight toward them.

"He will surely turn aside," said Flora to Alan. "He will certainly not like to meet Grant now." But Alan shook his head, for he knew well that Shaw would not turn aside for any one. Nor did he. He stalked straight forward with his head up and his hand on the spot where his ancestors had worn their dirks. He had outlived the custom of the ready weapon, but not the impulse to use it. With glowering, passionate gaze he met them; staring boldly, blushlessly, and insolently into the faces he hated. Alan bent his head to Flora, and Fame and Grant were occupied entirely with each other. No one seemed to notice the offensive young man. He had been intimate with Alan, and Alan no longer knew him. He had been a familiar friend of Flora's, and she ignored his presence. He had rather patronized Grant while he was yet under age, had stayed in his home, and taught him a great deal about grouse and deer; and Grant

now passed him without a look; nay, he even managed to infuse into his total indifference the scorn he felt for a man who could lie for his own ends without scruple and without mercy.

It was well this meeting was passing and transient and on the public street, for in the few moments covering it Shaw drank a cup that could only be mingled in hell—hatred, revenge, murder were rioting in his heart. Fame's laugh hurt him like a sword thrust, and Flora's cool oblivion set the blood in his veins racing and boiling with ungovernable rage. He was sure Fame and Grant were talking of him and of the lie which he had told to separate them. He was sure that Alan was defaming him to Flora, and that Flora believed all he chose to tell her; so, though the outward man passed them in a fiendish silence, the inner man was venting his diabolical disappointment in short, furious assertions, emphasized, as was usual with him under great emotion, by the quick *sa! sa!* of the angry Highlander.

"This is all because we wanted our money—*sa! sa!* That despicable young scoundrel would have cheated me out of two hundred pounds! Fame's father is just as bad—a pair of rogues—the McDuffs were too many for them—and the McDuffs, thank glory, have their money! Let them laugh! *Sa! sa! sa!* Let them sneer!

Who cares? I am not eating out of their cup—no, indeed! I would poison it if I could—I'll make Dunbrack too hot for them yet—see if I don't! And, worst of all, that cool, insolent, unseeing minister this morning! He, too! *Sa!* He, too, *sa!* In Mackenzie's and Macrae's company I was not there to him—the proud, egotistical, opinionative pedant that he is—I was to be this and that at his wedding, and I am nothing, worse than nothing! Confound the whole crowd! I wish Dunbrack would turn into a furnace and burn the last bone of them!"

Such thoughts are poison to the heart that nurses them, and they did affect for a while those to whom they were directed. A certain stillness and sadness insinuated itself into the joyous atmosphere of the four happy hearts, but no evil is long potent against the power of love. Before Dunbrack was reached Shaw had been quite forgotten, and they were talking happily of the coming winter and the prospects it offered for continuing their companionship.

And seldom has an unexpected visitor found such welcome as awaited young Grant. Jessie looked upon him as specially sent to avert any ill fortune that might have come from a missing wedding guest; and, indeed, Grant was well able to make himself acceptable to all his entertainers. He was respectful to his elders and sympathetic

and good-natured with those of his own age. Macrae already liked him; and the Mackenzies were desirous to gain the good-will of a family so distinguished and so neighborly as the Grants. So, then, the advent of Gillian was a peculiar pleasure, and there was a distinct exhilaration in the house of Dunbrack because of his coming. Certainly Jessie had a right to be in her brightest mood, for this last evening of her "girlhood's days" was the most delightful of the many delightful evenings the past summer had witnessed.

She was even ungrateful enough to say confidentially to Flora that she was glad Shaw McDuff had no longer a place in their home circle. He was so hard to please, so touchy, so ready to feel and to show offence; but this gay, good-tempered, handsome Gillian Grant thought only of others and of what he could do to please others. "I am afraid," she continued, "Shaw would have brought me dissension or bad luck of some kind, but nothing but good can come from such a godsend as young Grant." And perhaps Jessie only voiced clearly something of the sentiment that was in every heart.

At last, at last, it was Jessie's bridal day. The good girl had her usual good fortune. The weather was all that could be wished; the arrangements were so perfect that there was neither hurry nor delay. Events fitted into

events precisely as they had been ordered. Even the messenger sent to Loch Grant for Gillian's dress-suit arrived with it before any one had begun to feel anxious for its arrival, and the whole house was as calm and devoid of worry or excitement as if it was an ordinary Sabbath morning.

At ten o'clock the village minister—who was to perform the ceremony—arrived. He found the bridegroom and the two Mackenzies and Ian Macrae and Grant chatting comfortably together in the large parlor, and he sat down and joined in the conversation. Not even the bridegroom was restless, for he had the most profound confidence that all his bride's arrangements would be without flaw or hindrance. And precisely as the clock struck eleven the provost left the room, but returned immediately with his daughter on his arm. Very fair, exquisitely robed, the sweetest image and ideal of a minister's bride was Jessie Mackenzie at this important hour of her destiny. And her lover was worthy of her. He took her with solemn vows and pure and true affection into his life, and then they turned with radiant faces to meet together the joys and sorrows of the years they were to share.

Before two o'clock Jessie had left her family and her home forever; the mirth incident to her

departure was over, and a breath of sadness went through the partly deserted house. No one could quite get the better of the feeling. Mrs. Mackenzie shut herself in her room, the provost and his friend Macrae went off to the hills for awhile. Not all the brave show of merrymaking could hide the still sense of "bereavement" that was present. The family, as yet unbroken, had that day lost a member; and there was a melancholy pain in all the places where Jessie had left her image and her memory.

"If one could only be lovers forever and ever, and put marriage out of consideration, how happy we might be," said Fame. "What did Jessie get married for? She had everything her heart could desire."

"I think," answered Flora, "that women have an innate consciousness that marriage is necessary to their salvation—I mean, its trials and experiences, and so on."

"I think, at any rate, they know that it makes them more interesting," said Grant.

"More interesting!" cried Fame; "what nonsense!"

"Oh, but it does," continued Grant; "marriage is greater than love, just as Penelope is greater than Nausika. Marriage, not love, is the acme of life. At least, I think so."

"But there is such a thing as Platonic love," said Fame; "I have heard of it."

"And it is Platonic nonsense," answered Gillian with a merry laugh. "Love is life; I have loved, I have lived; I do love, I am living; and if I love and am loved I would defy any ill fortune to make me miserable." Then he looked at Fame, and her splendid eyes lengthened and languished with the love that was brooding in her heart.

But Alan said not a word. He looked from Fame to Flora, and as his eyes met hers, he felt in their clear, candid light a revelation of love that was for him and him only; and with self-reproaching thoughts uttered in his heart the wisest and tenderest of household prayers:

"Grant that I may be saved from offences against my own affections."

CHAPTER X.

FAME MAKES A CONFESSION.

A FEW days after Jessie's marriage the provost returned to Glasgow, and the house in some mysterious way became permeated with that restless sense of coming change which infects even birds of passage just before their migration. For all changes have a certain melancholy; we are leaving something behind us, and that something is part of ourselves. Autumn, with its pensive odor of decay, its dreamy daylights and sad twilights, had taken full possession; the moors were no longer purple, the woods no longer green, and the mountains—turned iron gray, and standing in austere shadows—looked stupendous.

Mrs. Mackenzie was now eager to return to her city home; but it was no light work to "put the house away" for the winter. And she would have no help but her Cousin Thrift's, who, she said, "had her wits about her and no lovers to turn them topsy-turvy." In reality she wanted the young people to have the full pleasure of these last

days. It made her happy to see them go off to the woods and come home with arms full of bronzing ferns. She liked to have them gather round the dinner-table, hungry and tired and full of what they had seen and heard tell of.

Perhaps Fame was not quite as much at Dunbrack as formerly; for Grant went often to Macrae's, and Fame had a more selfish and exacting nature than Flora; she liked Grant best when she had him entirely to herself. But Alan was not sorry for this arrangement. Fame's ready resignation of his attentions and his society was not a flattering thing; and he perceived clearly that her fancy for himself had been light and evanescent as a dream. Grant had awakened her, and she was his princess beyond doubt or recall. And when all excuses and prior claims had been allowed, it was a kind of desertion Alan did not like; he felt that he would have run the risk of temptation if he might have received with it a little of that flattering balm which women usually administer to lovers who have had their day.

However, these thoughts troubled only the surface of his life; Flora was life itself to him. He was not sorry when they were left to wander alone, and hand in hand—sometimes very silently—climb to the highest point of Dunbrack Mountain, to watch the young ravens on the gray precipice, croaking and playing queer antics with

each other; or to admire the handsome cock grouse strutting proudly with their mates, their red combs and beautiful brown plumage glistening in the sun. Sometimes they went to the graveyard where the faithful Earne's cast-off mortality had been laid. They put late flowers, and heather, and ferns on the lonely mound, and talked about his true heart, and wondered in what blest isle of God his spirit tarried. Alan had ordered a shaft of white marble to mark the spot, but in the meantime the oar which his strong arm had once plied stood upright at the head of the grave, and kept his name fresh in eyes that yet wept for him.

Every day the coming change was more in evidence. Large trunks cumbered the halls, the fine furniture was shrouded in white linen, and there was that unavoidable relaxation of order and discipline which accompanies disruption of any kind. Alan felt all that this change meant for him. It was not that he must leave Dunbrack, he was to leave home altogether. He was to go to a strange city and to unusual and important duties. He was to miss constantly the cheering love and encouraging presence of Flora, and for the first time in his life he was to stand alone. But he was really anxious to stand.

For this very reason he frequently during these last days sought the society of Macrae. His stately antique sincerity, the entire genuineness of

his character, had won the heart of his young disciple. He confided to him his hopes and his aspirations, and was invariably lifted up by his counsels. For Macrae highly approved the provost's plans for his son, and when Alan described his intentions and the work before him he answered him enthusiastically in the stirring practical Hebraic counsel :

"Get thee forth into their midst, and whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might."

"I shall be alone," said Alan; "there will be no one to help or advise me."

"God is for you; He is always on your side if you are having the faintest desire to do better. He is always willing your uttermost salvation. Are you able to imagine any greater strength for moral improvement than this?"

"I shall have a constant fight with my weak, ignoble tendencies."

"You will be finding out that the only way to fight them is to replace them with nobler ones. Moreover, remember this, if your vices do not die while you live, if they survive you, they will be born again with you. Conquer them now; you have a good opportunity; perhaps a far more favorable one than you may have if you leave their conquest to some future time—or life."

"Then what is the first step to be taken?"

"Tell me this: if you were a sculptor and had some old clay which you wished to make into a new form, what is the first thing you would be doing?"

"I would, of course, first consider what kind of a new form I wished to make—man, woman, child, or animal."

"Just so. Then, if you are wishing to change your old character for one nobler and higher, you will first of all set before your imagination and your will the lofty, pure ideal you wish to realize within your own soul."

"And what next, sir?"

"Then you will be protecting this ideal in your heart of hearts, shielding it by daily prayer and keeping it out of danger—that is, out of temptation—and you will soon be finding your ideal growing to a reality."

"Is that all?"

"Yes. Can you make a single grain of wheat grow? You cannot. All you can do is to prepare the conditions under which wheat will grow. In like manner you cannot grow a single grace within you, but the grace will be growing of itself if you furnish the proper soil, and the soil is your life. It will be a foolish thing to be talking and dreaming of some great ideal if you do not let it nourish itself by your life. Love, justice, truth, knowledge, are not objects for study or thought; no,

indeed! they must become part of our very life; we must nourish them in our souls by living in harmony with their great principles."

"If one has an evil passion and cannot control it, how can it best be resisted, sir?" asked Alan.

"You will not be able to resist what you cannot control—no, indeed!"

"Then, how can control be gained?"

"You can never annihilate a passion, but you can, as I said before, lead it into higher channels. If you do not do this it will grow and grow till it becomes stronger than your will or your reason. But listen to me, Alan; you can displace a wicked passion by a virtuous one; just as superstition is displaced by knowledge, greed by generosity, weakness of will by sturdy resolves inflexibly and unflinchingly carried out."

"And there is always prayer to help."

"Take care what you mean by that," said Macrae with emphasis.

"Do you not believe in prayer? Oh, yes you do! I know you do."

"I believe that there is not one single instance in the history of man in which true prayer has failed. If any one has not obtained what they asked, it only proves that they were not knowing how to pray."

"What is true prayer?" sighed Alan. "Who knows?"

"I will tell you. It is not only words, it is also works. The gods do help those who help themselves; for prayer is the lifting up of the soul to the highest ideal it has. Our ideal will not come down to us; we are to rise up by prayer and good works to it. Yes, indeed! How else are we to become conquerors of our lower selves and step higher toward God?"

"I am not sure I understand."

"Think one moment, Alan. If you take into your mind any thought it will grow and grow till it will needs express itself in words and actions. If you think wrong of a person, and encourage that thought, soon you will say wrong of him, and it will not be long till you *do* him wrong. For if you wish to call up a wicked spirit, you need not go in search of him, you will only be requiring to permit him to come—that is, if an evil thought enters the soul, and you take its claims into your consideration, you give it a promise, you induce it to remain, and it will urge and urge its claim until it is granted. Is not this so?"

"I know it is."

"Well, then, a good thought is far more mighty. Let it enter your soul, take all its claims into your consideration, guard it with prayer, feed it with holy aspirations, and let it work in you and through you its perfect work. Thus a man's acts express his thoughts, they are his writing in the

Book of Life. And such prayer never failed and never will fail."

These were the great facts which underlay all their conversations, and Alan accepted as much of them as he was able at that time to assimilate. Certainly they stimulated and strengthened that intensive life which strikes root downward, and these last days of pale sunshine and cool, short twilights were to Alan days of large horizons, days in which he realized that in its relation to what is to be hereafter there is no human business or occupation which is not awful and sacred—the work given us to do, our portion in the days of our vanity, our discipline, and our task.

At length the very last day of their sojourn at Dunbrack came. Alan spent a couple of hours with Macrae, and on his way home walked to the pier to see if the little steamer which was to carry back to Glasgow their belongings had arrived. He found her just casting anchor, and turned quickly home to superintend the removal of the luggage to her deck. On his way up the mountain he met Fame, and they walked to the castle together. The trees were bare and the road ankle deep in leaves, and there was a slight frost on the ground. Fame was unusually silent, but she was "all there;" and in some way known to women—and generally natural to them—she managed to put a distance between Alan and herself that it was impossible

for him to cross. He could not say a word of admiration or love to her, and he was not sorry for this condition, but he imagined Fame might expect him to do so. On the contrary, she compelled him to wonder whether he really ever had made love to her; whether he really ever had kissed those lips, at once so smiling and so forbidding. He would not have been astonished if Fame had positively denied it. He was half inclined to tempt her to do so. He looked at her reproachfully, and she was quite unconscious of his grievance. He tried talking sentimentally, and asked her if she yet remembered what delightful walks they had in the moonlit garden; and she answered with a pretty enthusiasm:

"Oh, yes! And in the wood! and on the sea-shore! Oh, it was all charming! The happiest time of my life! And I am going to Glasgow this winter, and father is going with me; how nice it is to have a little money to spare!"

"And a little love to spare also," said Alan at a venture, trying to pique her into some acknowledgment.

"Oh, dear me, no," she answered with disdain. "Who wants the 'sparings' of love?"

Then Alan thought, "Flora has told her of our engagement," and he said no more; but he kicked the fallen leaves with his walking stick until Fame said:

"What have the leaves done to you? Are you forgetting how pleasant was their rustle and their shadow when the sun was hot? I don't like such ingratitude." And Alan was kept safely busy defending himself from this charge until they reached the castle.

He left Fame at the parlor door, and he left her with a burning and indignant heart, angry at women in general, and very angry at Fame in particular. "Her eyes had a look in them that checked me on every side," he muttered. "It was her fault, too. What unreliable, provoking creatures women are! As for Fame, she is over fond of Fame to love any man as he ought to be loved—and I'm not caring—I'm not caring a penny piece: there is Flora—dear, sweet, lovable Flora! I am well content with my womanly Flora, and I'm rather sorry for Grant running after such a will-o'-the-wisp as Fame Macrae."

While Alan was relieving his wounded pride by such reflections and assertions Fame sought her friend. She was not in the "put by" parlors, but she found her in the upper room which was specially her own. This apartment was still cosey and comfortable. There was no furniture in it of any financial value, Flora having chosen nearly every piece from the ancient belongings of her own family. The little tent bed had been safe for two generations in the Dunbrack garret, and it

would be quite as safe neatly spread in Flora's own room. The tapestry chairs, and the old cabinet, and the case of drawers, and the faded work-table of Lady Sara—these things could defy both time and thieves; and they stood in their usual comfortable order about the pleasant, restful place. There was a bright, blazing fire of ash logs in the open hearth, and Flora sat before it with a book in her hand. She was delighted to put it down and welcome her friend.

"I am so glad to see you, Fame!" she cried. "This sense of going away makes the days so long. I was thinking of you, and wondering how soon you would come, and half afraid Gillian would get hold of you before I did."

As she said these friendly words she was untying Fame's hat and helping her to remove her mantilla, and setting her a chair on the hearth-rug beside her own.

"I have very good and very important news to tell you, dear Flora," said Fame with a very important air. "What do you think? We are going to Glasgow; father and I are both going. Father had a letter this morning from Mr. Mackenzie, and he says he can let us have a pretty home for the winter at a rent so small it is not worth thinking about. And father was pleased at the offer, and we are going to Glasgow in a month."

"I know the house, Fame. I heard uncle speak

of it—a very pretty place near Kelvin Grove. It belongs to his old friend Bailie Brodie, who is going to the south of France with his sick daughter. I am glad about it—so very glad, Fame.”

“It is quite a providence, Flora, because I shall have a great deal to do this winter, for I am to be married in the spring.”

“I expected that news, Fame. Any one could see that Gillian and you were intended for each other. Such a good-hearted, handsome fellow! And how dearly he loves you!”

“Well,” answered Fame, “he does nothing but tell me so; and I do think we were intended for each other, because even Shaw McDuff’s malice could not part us. How Shaw will blaze and shiver when he hears of our marriage! I am not sorry for him, not at all. He once told me I had been ‘proud of his attentions.’ Fancy that! Now some day I shall be Lady Grant, and that will be a position to be proud of; because the Grants are a fine old Highland family, almost as ancient and historic as the Macraes.”

“And so you are really to be married in the spring? And to Gillian, after all? I am so glad for you.”

“Gillian spoke to my father yesterday; they had a long talk, and Gillian told me that father kissed him when it was over, and called him his ‘dear son.’ Moreover, he said I would be having

every foot of the Macrae land, and that a part of it had once been the Grants' land, and so, very likely, land and lady were going home. You know how father would say these things? Gillian came back to me with tears in his eyes, and I am sure father will have the best of sons in Gillian."

"And you the best of husbands."

"I am sure of that. When we meet in Glasgow we shall arrange about the wedding and buy my wedding clothes. I am to have a very fine ceremony. Lady Grant is desiring it and Gillian also."

"And you?"

"I am feeling that it would not be right to go against their wishes, especially as it is my wish likewise," and Fame laughed happily as she added, "Will you believe that I lay awake hours last night dressing myself as a bride? I decided the matter a dozen times, and then considered it afresh. That was because I had not you to help me. You know I always leave the decisive word to you."

"You managed the decisive word about Gillian without my help, Fame."

"That is different. Nobody can choose a husband for a girl but the girl who has to live with him. At the beginning of our acquaintance you thought Shaw would make a very suitable husband for me."

"When I knew Shaw better I changed my

opinion. You would never have submitted to him. You could not have controlled him. You would have made both yourself and him miserable."

"It is more than likely I would have made Shaw miserable, but as for myself, I should have been finding a kind of happiness in that occupation."

"You are talking against yourself and without reason. But what is the use in speculating on what 'might have been'? What is to be is so much nicer."

"Yes, it is; but Shaw was not the only 'might have been.' I was very much in love with Alan for a little while—at least, I thought I was. Did you never notice it?"

"No."

"Of course, when Gillian came I knew it was but a passing fancy, and I made no scruple of letting Alan see at once that when the true lover arrived it was time to stop playing at love."

During this speech Flora was making a desperate effort to keep control of herself; and to the strong heart sorrow is spiritual force and swiftness. She rallied all her powers, and as Fame went carelessly on, stinging her with every word, she sat vaguely smiling and looking into the fire. But interiorly she was listening to the voice she never disobeyed, "*Be still! Be still! For Alan's sake be still! For your own sake be still!*"

So, though she was suffering, she made no sign. And Fame was not watchful nor even suspicious. Besides, she was full of her own interesting affairs, and just at present a little proud of her own importance. Gillian told her she was the most bewitching woman in the world, and she was inclined to believe Gillian. Her father petted and blessed her, and Lady Grant had sent her a very valuable ring and a message of love and welcome. She was going to triumph over Shaw and all her acquaintances; perhaps, indeed, a little bit over Flora. For though Flora was her chief friend, being engaged makes a difference in a girl's friendships; the engaged girl assuming tacitly, either of right or custom, a superiority over the girls not yet bespoken.

So Fame was not mindful of Flora's feelings; she had during the last two weeks began to think of things only as they affected herself; and when she spoke of Alan and being in love with him, she never took Flora into her consideration. Having made her confession, "I was very much in love with Alan for a little while," etc., she stooped forward and replaced a log that had fallen, and then looked at Flora for her answer to it.

And by this time Flora stood guard over herself; whatever was yet to be told her she would hear to the last word; her mouth was closed and a

little stern, and her eyes were fixed intently on the fire; but Fame took these signs as indicative either of a doubt as to her exact truthfulness or else of disapproval, perhaps of contempt. She was a little offended, and she said plainly:

"You need not look as if you did not believe me, Flora; I was in love with Alan, and more, Alan was in love with me—is yet, for that matter. He wanted to say sweet things to me an hour ago as we came through the wood, but I would not let him."

"It was wrong of Alan. He knew you were engaged, I suppose."

"Father was sure to tell him this morning; they were a long time together; however, Alan has a good opinion of himself."

"Has he?"

"You talk as if you did not care about things; and I am sure you know that men never can and never will believe they have lost their influence over a girl they once have influenced. Then they get the habit of saying nice things, and they say them, even if they don't want to say them."

"Do you think Alan does that?"

"I am certainly thinking so. He imagined I was expecting him to say sweet things this morning. I was not; I very soon made him feel, 'No thank you, sir.'"

"But I don't think I understand you properly, Fame. Do you mean me to infer that Alan has been accustomed to say sweet things to you?"

"I am not meaning you to 'infer' anything about it. I am telling you plain and straight that Alan has been making love to me ever since that night we walked in the garden and you would not go with us; that night when Shaw insisted on me going home with him and I would not go."

"I remember—it was just after Shaw had said you were engaged to him."

"Yes."

"Why did you not tell me this before, Fame?"

"Well, it is my nature to like a secret, and it seemed also to be Alan's. Then we were all tongue-tied by Jessie's affairs. I was, however, often on the point of telling you, but if ever I did turn the conversation to Alan you always grew silent and indifferent. You never would talk of him, and sometimes I thought you did not like him, and sometimes I thought perhaps you liked him too much."

"Too much? Oh, no!"

"I mean that you liked him more than he liked you; and that you felt this—dear Flora, I hardly know how to express my meaning, but indeed it is only a kind one."

"I know. It is my fault, I dare say."

"You see, Flora, Gillian appeared then to be

such a failure in love, and Shaw was a failure of another kind, and I did not want to talk about Alan until I was sure he was also not going to be a failure. I am glad now that I was keeping my own counsel, for Alan was, after all, but a half-and-half kind of a lover. You can see yourself he never made the slightest effort to dispute Gillian's claim on me. I wonder you noticed nothing, for Jessie told me several times not to be minding a word Alan said to me; and once Mrs. Mackenzie looked very queerly at me and said, 'You'll be requiring to take care what way you're stepping, Miss Macrae; one thing leads to another, and especially one kiss to another.' And I knew then that she had seen Alan kiss me, and that she was putting this and that together."

"Poor Alan! Has he quite lost your favor?"

"I am not angry at him at all. I like him. He can't help making love. I used to wonder if he was not making love to you whenever I was away from Dunbrack."

"You need not have wondered for an instant. If you had asked me, I should certainly have told you the truth."

"Somehow, one expects nothing positive from Alan. But you can never be angry with him. I shall invite him to my wedding. He will come and be the merriest of all the guests."

"I suppose he will. Fame, do you feel this

room very hot? I have a sick headache. Is it the fire? Please open the window. I hope I—am not—going to be ill—” and she moved unsteadily toward the bed, and slipped down prone and faint among its pillows.

“Flora! Flora! What is the matter?”

“Nothing—nothing at all—wait a little.”

In a few minutes she asked Fame to go and make her a cup of tea, and Fame went eagerly about it. Then the poor, heartbroken girl wrung her hands and moaned like a creature in mortal pain. And yet she knew that she must not now fail herself; she must rally all her forces and bear Fame’s chatter to the last moment; for the one intolerable thing would be to have Fame—to have any one—know of her lover’s unfaithfulness to her.

Fortunately Fame did not stay very much longer; as soon as she saw Flora recovering she proposed sleep as the best restorative, and Flora eagerly accepted her advice. This arrangement gave her a few hours of solitude, and it is in solitude and in the secret haunts of the spirit that the healing springs take their rise. Alone she found them out, and when dinner time came she was not only able to face Alan, but was quite sure in her own mind of the course she ought to take. It was a gloomy meal, which no one seemed to enjoy. Mrs. Mackenzie was tired and a little fretful. So

many things had not happened as she had expected them to happen; and the household cares had worn her nervously out. She excused herself as soon as the meal was over, and leaving Thrift in charge of the final arrangements, went to her room.

"You look so tired, mother," said Alan, "and I am thinking this moving house twice a year is a bad thing."

"There will be a good as well as a bad side to everything, Alan; the great point is to find it out. And, Flora, you be to remember the feckless feeling you had this afternoon, and give yourself a good sleep."

"I will," she answered pleasantly. "I shall be all right in the morning."

Alan was smoking comfortably by the fireside, and as soon as Mrs. Mackenzie had said her final "good-night" he rose and pushed his chair beside Flora. She did not oppose this advance, but when he would have taken her hand, she said:

"Alan, I have something to tell you—something to ask you. Understand that I shall take your word before the word of any other person. You have been accused to me; if you deny the accusation I shall accept your denial as the truth and act in accord with it. If you are guilty, I think you have so much honor as to say so. Fame told me this afternoon that you have been making

love to her. Did she speak the truth or was it only a little bit of Fame's vanity? Tell me, Alan."

Then Alan threw his cigar into the fire, and his face flushed till it was hot and red as flame. He hesitated, for nothing but the truth would come to his mind; and the truth was so hard to tell. In fact, he remained silent so long that Flora said sorrowfully:

"I see—it is the truth. Oh, Alan! Alan!"

"Flora! dear Flora! it is the truth, and yet it is not the truth. There is only one truth in this matter, and that is that never have I ceased to love you for a moment since you promised to be my wife. I cannot excuse myself; if you cannot imagine and allow for my temptation there is no one else to plead for me. I have been weak, but not false. Oh, no, not false to you. You pleaded with father for me, now plead with your own heart for me."

"I have done so. I acknowledge that I also am to blame. When you wished to make public our love and our engagement, I would not let you do so. I might have known that a concealed love breeds sorrow or wrong of some kind. If our love had been known Fame would never have tempted you with those bewitching ways that subjugate men so readily—I have watched her with Grant—and I can understand the influence and glamour she threw over you. I am not blaming Fame; she did not know how far she was wronging me."

"When she was present."

"Yes, I know. I have thought of these things, Alan; and, as I told you, I blame myself most of all. But you are going to London, and you will meet many beautiful girls; and I will not be any hindrance to your freest choice. I give you back your promise in its fullest sense. I do not wish to be kept in your heart by simply shutting me in there. As I have not had the power to bind your wandering fancy, it is likely we have made a mistake and I am not the woman you ought to marry. Give yourself the freedom to find this out; and if at the end of two years you can come honestly to me and say, 'I love you better than any woman in the world, and I feel that I can love you for life and for death, for weal and for woe,' then I will never doubt you more. I will be yours forever."

"It is a hard sentence, Flora, but I deserve it—and I will come at the end of it and say I love you."

"Then all shall be as it was. In the meantime the world must not see any change in our relationship to each other. Your father knows I love you, but it is a secret in his own breast; your mother and Jessie may suppose it; Fame does not even suspect it. I do not think our love should be the subject of either pity or sympathy or intercession."

"You will forget me. You will take your love from me. I shall be the most forsaken of men."

"I will not forget you. I will never take my love from you. The promise I made you will stand while moons rise and set and waters run to the sea."

"With this promise I can bear all and conquer all."

And she really did trust in him. Taking into her consideration the concealment of their love as the first wrong step, she understood how easily this concealment had bred temptation, and how potent a temptation Fame must have been. Nor did she underestimate the pride of rivalling Shaw, and of winning from him the girl he had so falsely claimed. She saw also, when she looked back over the past summer, that she herself had often thrown her lover into temptation, and she felt compelled to confess to her own heart, "I am not innocent."

And with this self-accusation there came for her lover pity, and love, and faith, and finally a glow of pride in him, as she reminded herself that not even for her love had he lied; and that furthermore he had taken his guilt on his own shoulders and scorned to blame Fame, or in any way to screen or excuse his wrong-doing under the ancient plea of the man—"The woman beguiled me." And there was hope, invincible hope, in these reflections; they robbed wrong and disap-

Fame Makes a Confession 279

pointment of all their bitterness, and she fell asleep smiling to the song they sang to her.

And into Alan's shame and sorrow she infused the same strong hope for the future, and he left her presence full of those noble determinations which can say courageously and with inviolate purpose,

"Yet though no light be left, nor bird now sing
As here I turn, I'll thank God, hastening,
That the same goal is still on the same track."

CHAPTER XI.

FAME IS MARRIED.

IN a short time the provost's family were again settled in their Glasgow home. And Mrs. Mackenzie was specially happy in this return to what she called "regular civilized life." Her large, lofty rooms, with their splendidly solid furniture, and the gleaming of the coal fires on the bright steel hearths, on the Russian leather and crimson damask, and dark oak or rosewood, filled her heart with the atmosphere and sense of home. And she looked and spoke as the very genius of the place should do. The Glasgow air and the Glasgow manner was in all her ways and speech, she held herself with more dignity, feeling that here—with the great lamps bearing the city's arms before her fine doorsteps and the ladies of the municipality paying her homage—she was in very deed the wife of Robert Mackenzie, provost of the great city of Glasgow.

Still, there was a woful sense of Alan's absence through the stately dwelling. She had often

grumbled at his careless, hasty ways, at his habit of "tossing up" tidy rooms, at his noisy steps, his singing and whistling, his irregular hours and his late rising, but oh, how glad she would have felt had these trials not been taken from her! She constantly worried her husband to bring them back.

"I'm not caring for anything now, Robert. Alan is away and the town is empty to me, and the house is like Sunday from week's end to week's end. Bring the lad home again. What for are you banishing him to a town like London in the very winter, with fogs thicker than your morning porridge, and folks that are all stranger folks to him? What has the lad done to be served in such a like way?"

"Alan is very happy in London. I had a good letter from him this morning. There it is; read it."

"I will not. I don't want to read letters from him. I want my lad himself; and Flora may laugh and sing as much as she likes, I am knowing well she is wanting him also. The very servants are missing him, and asking, 'When is Mr. Alan coming back?' And I am not going to be surprised if Ann Fife throws up her place altogether; for she says there is no pleasure in cooking anything now that Mr. Alan is not here either to praise or ban it; for it is well known to Ann that

you havena any more skill than a baby about a meal's meat."

"I will give her a shilling now and then; that will do as well as Alan's praise or banning."

"And what will you give to Flora? You can't offer her money, and the lassie is pining, or I am no judge of love-sick women."

"You are all wrong, Marian. Flora is not the girl to pine after any man."

"Provost, when you are densely ignorant on a subject I would keep whist on it; and you are simply an ignoramus anent love and women. Flora is fretting for Alan. You may take my word or leave it, but you can't make it anything but a true word."

"Well, then, you must all of you take a few months' fretting—you, and Flora, and the huzzies in the kitchen likewise. Alan has gone to London for a year, and he is going to stay in London for a year—or there will be changes not yet thought of. Give some new dresses in the kitchen, and I dare say Gilbert Stuart will soon take Flora's mind off Alan Mackenzie."

"Provost! provost! Gilbert Stuart put our Alan to the wall! Not he nor twenty like him. It passes all believing."

"What passes all believing?"

"The stupendous foolishness of a wise man

meddling with things he knows nothing about. I want you to bring Alan home again."

"I'll not do it, Marian. Where is Jessie? One would think you had neither chick nor child left you."

"I have not. Jessie's married. Is there any occasion to specify more reasons? That takes in all and sundry. Jessie is so set up with her husband and her house she has clean forgotten she ever had a mother or a home."

"She will get over that."

"I'm not looking for things impossible, provost. I have heard what other mothers say. I thought I was to be the exception to the rule; all mothers think that, and all of them get the buff and the buffet alike. If it wasna that mothers are promised salvation for child-bearing, who would be a mother? There would be no earthly compensation for the pain, and the care, and the cast-away love."

"Tut, tut, Marian! Jessie is happy. Let that content you."

"It is gey hard for a mother to reach that height, Robert. I want Alan back."

"Alan will marry, too, some day."

"Say that. I am not doubting it, neither am I doubting he will always be mother's boy. That is the differ. A girl is weak, and she lets her hus-

band absorb her whole nature; a girl is never just, she gives all to the feeling that pleases her most; but a man is just, first of all; he never forgets the mother that bore him and nursed him at her breast; if she be a good mother, she will be 'mother' to his last moment. And a man is stronger than a woman; it is very seldom he lets any woman make him over to please herself. You have not let me do that to you, Robert, not by a long heft; and though Alan is weaker than you, he is strong enough to rob neither wife nor mother, no, nor yet father of the love due them. I want you to bring Alan back to me."

"Well, well, in good time—in good time."

"No time but now is a good time. I want him home for the New Year."

"He cannot come. That is enough said, and I have not another word on the subject."

Then the anxious mother went to Flora. Flora was always ready to talk about Alan, and his mother's longings were never tiresome to her. For she was really fretting about her lover. Very grave doubts as to the wisdom of his father's course, and also of her own course, constantly assailed her. The divine Son of Man had dictated the very opposite way. He had judged it best for the weak not to be thrown into the way of temptation; and Alan had been, as it were, set in the very

midst of circumstances requiring the strongest will and the most rigid self-discipline. Was it fair? Was it kind? If he fell, whose fault would it be? Would his father, would she herself be innocent? So often she had heard Ian Macrae say that beautiful, weak souls were sent to the homes and households of strength that they might be helped upward, steadied, and guided, borne with, and forgiven even until seventy times seven; making invincible, never-failing love their constant creditor; so that by all means they might not fail to "buy the truth" or the special virtue they had been sent to purchase. And they had sent Alan out from them, alone into the market-places of Vanity Fair, and told him he was there to obtain the very virtues in which it was notoriously wanting.

Indulging such thoughts and regrets, it was natural for Flora to come gradually more and more into sympathy with Alan's mother; and equally natural that this community of feeling was the very soil necessary for a sincere affection to root and grow in. So that day by day Flora became dearer and dearer to Mrs. Mackenzie, more necessary to her happiness, and more pleasant in her sight. Jessie had always been just and moderately affectionate to her; and her marriage made no visible difference in their friendship. She returned from her bridal journey soon after the

provost's family were settled in their Glasgow home, and no one could deny that she scrupulously paid the anise and cummin of a daughter's duty as she conceived it. Every fine day she visited her mother, and if she showed any want of sympathy in her old home and relations, she was not herself conscious of it. She had always objected to Alan's residence in London, and she was naturally pleased that her mother and Flora had realized the wisdom of her objections.

"James disapproved of the plan from the first," she said one day when they were talking of the matter; "and James is seldom wrong; he has a native sagacity about things that is not easily equalled."

"We all know that James is infallible, Jessie," answered Mrs. Mackenzie, "but I am thinking James never rightly knew Alan. And a man cannot advise where he does not know."

"On general principles he can, mother; and on general principles it is unwise to go into temptation. I was saying to James this morning mother, what a grand thing and what a proper thing it would be if you could persuade father to come and 'sit under' James. It would just be the making of St. John's Kirk."

"Jessie Laidlaw, I am astonished at you," answered Mrs. Mackenzie with some anger. "My grandfather and grandmother, my father and my

mother also, sat in the old Ram's Horn Kirk; I was baptized in it; I was married in it; Alan and yourself were baptized in it, and I and your father have sat under Dr. Micklehose for twenty-nine years. Do you think I will leave my kirk and my minister at this hour of my life? You be to remember, Jessie, all that my kirk is to me."

"It seems, at least, to be more to you than your daughter," said Jessie in a tone of sad reproach.

"Well, well, it seems that James Laidlaw was more to you than your mother," was the answer with an equal tone of reproach.

"Suppose, aunt," said Flora, with apparent unconsciousness of the little tiff, "suppose you invited the first sewing circle to your house. James could announce it next Sabbath."

"That would be a very good thing, Flora," said Jessie. "'The first sewing circle of the season will meet at Provost Mackenzie's such a date,' and so on. What do you say, mother? It would make quite a stir in our kirk."

"If it pleasures you, Jessie, you be to have your way, my dear. We have been wanting to ask Dr. Livingston to the house, and he might give us his famous lecture in the evening about Asia Minor. Mrs. MacLaren was saying it had a wealth of fine poetry in it; and he is a very popular young man just now."

"Mother, that would be a splendid thing! Can James speak of it next Sabbath Day?"

"I see nothing to hinder."

"James will be so gratified, and the ladies of St. John's will be proud, indeed, to have an invite into the provost's house. It is real good of you, mother, and I am sure it will be a precious time."

"I wish Alan was here. As to poetry, there's few can recite as he can. The dear lad!"

"I wish he was here," said Jessie. "It is perfectly ridiculous of father sending him to England. What will he learn there worth the learning? I only hope he does not come back an Episcopalian. James thinks he is in great danger because of his sensuous nature; he says he is not the young man to be allowed fire to play with."

"Your father knows well what he is doing, Jessie. It is not many people that would find Provost Mackenzie 'perfectly ridic'lous,' and Alan is no fool. If there is fire in his road he will be knowing enough to keep out of the draught of the blaze. Neither you nor James need to spend an anxious hour for Alan; his mother's prayers will be aye building a wall between him and all danger."

"I saw a notice of James's Sabbath sermon in the *North Briton*," said Flora, and Jessie was glad of the interruption. It gave her an opportunity

to get out of a dilemma with a little flourish of trumpets for her husband; and so home with the good news about the sewing circle.

In such occupations and society the first weeks of the winter passed. The provost was smiling and happy, and often dropped remarks specially intended to satisfy Flora concerning Alan, without drawing attention to that fact; and now and then, meeting her alone in the halls or the parlors, he would say, "Alan sends more than a month's messages, dear. He is well and doing well. A good boy, my dear!" And they would smile into each other's eyes and pass on, both of them pleased and comforted.

One morning shortly before Christmas a letter arrived from Morandaroch announcing the near arrival of Fame and her father. It must be confessed that it gave Flora no pleasure. In fact, she had begun to doubt and dislike Fame; and these are feelings that grow with little to sustain them. Try as she would, she could not believe that Fame had been absolutely ignorant of the relationship between herself and Alan. A girl so clever and observant must have noticed many little things which could hardly fail to arouse, at least, suspicion. It was true Fame had never made the slightest allusion to this suspicion, but Flora did not consider this reticence a point in her favor. "She wished to be thought ignorant in order to

excuse herself if the affair was discovered under unfortunate circumstances."

This was the decision Flora came to, and she reflected also that it was not until Grant appeared Fame played the rôle of confidence in her. Grant was the more desirable lover, and so she threw over Alan and made her confession. And Flora thought the confession a bit of unnecessary treachery to Alan. There was no need to make it, except the personal need of exalting her own charm over men, and the still more dubious one of wounding her through Alan. Yes, she came at last to believe that Fame had designedly told her of Alan's lapse out of a spirit entirely mean and envious.

Her letter, therefore, was not welcome. She felt all the triumph of its tone. It really read thus to her: "Alan has gone to London because he could not bear to meet me with Grant. He could not bear to see me married 'to another'—and am I not going to make a splendid alliance? and do you not wish you were equally fortunate? and surely I am a little sorry for you!" Something like these ideas ran through Flora's mind all the time she was reading the gay, boastful little letter.

"How soon are they coming, Flora?" asked Mrs. Mackenzie.

"In three days."

"When is Fame to be married?"

"In April. Then they are going to France, Germany, Italy, Greece, Palestine—perhaps, indeed, to the North Pole. Fame has the world at her feet, and is inclined to send it spinning."

"I am glad Alan never fancied the lassie. She is a dangerous bit of beauty. She will rule or rate any man."

"I thought Alan admired her very much."

"So he did, but admiration is not love. No, indeed! Thank God for the same. Alan admired Kitty Derenzy, and to my certain knowledge—though I never said a word about it—he went night after night to Glover's Theatre to see her dance; but as for loving the lassie and wanting to take her into his home and heart, I don't believe he ever thought of such a thing. There were sundry others. I never bothered myself about them. I would be almost ready to say that the lad had some pure, true love that kept the door of his heart against all pretenders."

However, when Fame really came in person she put aside all doubts and dislikes. She was so full of life and love and hope and joy that her presence was contagious; people caught her spirit and helped her, and admired her, and whether they approved or not, gave her not only their sympathy, but their active personal assistance.

So the dark, dismal days of winter went merrily enough. The provost was a great deal with his

friend, and Fame was a great deal at the provost's. And when young Grant arrived on the scene it required all the influence of the Mackenzies to keep events in a reasonable groove. But at length the great day, to which all the days for many months had come and gone, arrived, and the church of St. Mary's was filled with a fashionable crowd to witness the transformation of Miss Euphania Macrae into Mrs. Gillian Grant. And she was so lovely in her bride gown, and Grant was so happy and so manly, and Sir Archibald Grant and Lady Grant so proud of their handsome daughter-in-law, that the whole audience caught fire from their enthusiasm. Never had St. Mary's been so full of that joyous feeling which is the result of a happy multitude—its rustling of fine dresses, its movements of pleasure, its soft sighs and whispers and almost inaudible laughter—and never had the rapture and beauty of bride and groom seemed more worthy of the sympathy and congratulation they received. The wedding breakfast was given at the provost's house, and then the newly married pair went off to France, Spain, Germany, Greece, etc.—sure of one thing, however, that whatever the world called the place of their abiding, they knew it as Paradise.

Of course Alan had been invited to the wedding, but he had not been present; and when the

stir and excitement of Fame's marriage were over Flora felt a want and loneliness that was indescribable. One wet, dripping day, when all outside and inside was doleful and depressing, she met the provost in the hall. He was looking for his umbrella, and she went to help him. Something lonely in his face touched her keenly, and she asked softly as she put it into his hand:

"Must he stay longer away, uncle?"

"Yes, my dear."

"I want to see him."

"So do I."

"It is my birthday next Tuesday. He could get here."

"No, no, he must thole it out."

But that night the provost, when he gathered his family for the evening exercise, passed by the chapter that was in order, and said, "We will read this night the fourteenth chapter of the second of Samuel unto the fifteenth verse. She knew, then, that the father's heart was turning over with abounding love the thought of bringing home his banished again; and when he clasped her hand that night it was as if his heart touched her heart, and they both beat together.

A few days after this confidence the provost asked her one morning to call at his office about three o'clock. "I want you to come alone," he

said. "This is an affair relating entirely to yourself. Come by yourself."

"Very well," she answered; and a strange, wild hope concerning Alan haunted her heart all morning, and made her sing she knew not what joyous snatches of old and new melody. About three o'clock Flora stepped into Robert Mackenzie's office, and was immediately taken to his private room. There were two other gentlemen with him, and Flora was a little astonished to find one of them was Mr. Crawford, her lawyer and the manager of her affairs. The other stranger she had never seen before, but he proved to be the chief partner of Lockhart Brothers, lawyers in the Canadian city of Toronto. She was a little afraid, and her thoughts instantly went to her lover. Had he been doing something wrong? Was her help needed? She sat down sick and silent, and looked at the three men talking and exchanging mysterious-looking papers.

The provost very soon explained matters. "My dear Flora," he said, "you passed last Tuesday the age your father fixed for your majority. These gentlemen will now deliver to you their trust of your estates in England and in Canada. In Canada your property has nearly doubled its value since your father bought it; more than this can be said of his Chicago interests; and the English securities, which have been in Mr. Craw-

ford's hands, are all at par, or very nearly so. We have been going over your affairs together, my dear, and we find you a very wealthy young woman."

She sat very quiet during this address, trying to collect her thoughts, to calm her excitement, and not suffer any one to see that sudden accession to great wealth threw her off her balance. With respectful attention she listened to what Mr. Crawford and Mr. Lockhart had to say; made an appointment to meet them on the following afternoon regarding the continuance of their management; and then with a few grateful words for their honorable care of her interests she took leave of them. They were astonished at her wisdom and self-restraint.

"I expected a scene," said Mr. Lockhart, "and she made no more ado about one hundred thousand pounds than if I had been handing her a bawbee. I expected to be asked the why and the wherefore of this, that, and the other, and she says naething but 'Thank you, sir, and will you name an hour for the morrow?' A wonderful lassie! She's as prudent as Angus Dunbrack himself, and I needna say mair than that. It implies a' things convenient—and commendable."

Just as soon, however, as Flora reached the street all the woman in her asserted itself. She was trembling from head to feet, everything

seemed to waver before her vision, she could not walk, she could hardly realize her own personality. She wanted most of all sympathy, and who but Alan's mother could give it to her? But in half an hour she was at home with her happy news. Mrs. Mackenzie was in her room, and when Flora hastily entered it she saw her sitting with her feet on the fender, softly crying to herself.

"Oh, aunt!" she exclaimed, as she stooped to kiss her face, "oh, aunt, I have such great news to tell you!"

"Is Alan coming home?"

"Yes, aunt; I have been to see my trustees. I am of age, you know, and I find that I am very rich; and what can I do with my money but marry Alan, and let him guide it for me?"

"My dear lassie! Marry Alan!"

"Alan and I have been engaged nearly a year, and now—and now—I am going to ask uncle to send for him. For, aunt, what good will money do me without Alan?"

"You dear, dear lassie! Say 'mother' to me, and I will take you into my heart this very moment."

And Flora said "mother," and they sat down together, and talked of the wonderful thing that had come to her, and were quite forgetful of such an interference as time until the provost came for his

dinner, and found Flora still sitting with her hat on her head and her hand in the clasp of Alan's happy mother.

But every joy must have its shadow, it would want substance if it had it not; and the shadow in this joy was the provost's fixed determination not to call Alan home at once. "He is in the very middle of a large business transaction," he said; "it is a plan of his own conceiving and his own management, and I will not cheat the lad out of the profit and honor it is going to bring him. He is doing fine. Let him alone, you two unreasonable women, you! Your cup is full. Why will you want it to run over, specially when the wastry will be just Alan and Alan's future? No; you be to bide the right time. I will not set you a wrong time to Alan's loss. Not I!"

The next morning Flora said at the breakfast table, "I am going to see Ian Macrae. He will be glad to rejoice with us, I know."

"But he left for Morandaroch yesterday," said the provost.

"That is so," added Mrs. Mackenzie. "I forgot to tell you, Flora, that he called to see you on Wednesday when you were away with Jean Laird."

"Well, then, we shall meet soon at Morandaroch."

"I hope so," continued the provost, "but he is

very sick, 'just waiting to be dissolved,' he says. And his heart could not be satisfied wanting the old home, and the sound of the sea at its doors. 'I shall be going out of the gate I came in by, if it be God's will,' he said; 'I am thinking it will be the widest and the easiest.' "

"Had he heard from Fame lately?"

"Not for three weeks, but he was making no complaint about that. 'She has gone to her own kindred,' he said to me; 'she has gone home. I am not doubting it a moment.' "

"It is well he can comfort himself with such thoughts," said Mrs. Mackenzie. "I am not understanding the like."

"It is his belief that Fame came to him for instruction, and that the seed sown by Ian Macrae will grow and flourish and spread far and wide among the Grants and others. He counts little of his own love and care, and thinks, perhaps, Fame's spirit could find no other or no better way back to Grant than through the heart and home of Macrae; and if so, it was God's way, and so then God bless her. He is an unselfish soul as any I ever met or even imagined."

"Say that he is right, yet Fame has no call to forget the wise, tender old man who loves her so much."

"She has only forgotten for a little while," said

Flora, "and just at this time much may be forgiven her."

"Perhaps she will hardly forgive herself when it is too late to make atonement," said the provost.

"Her conscience—"

"Conscience! What is conscience, uncle?"

"My dear Flora, it is nothing else and nothing less than a direct message from our divine inner sufferer and prisoner. It is the power within us knowing by its own native wisdom the right and wrong of any moral question we are doubtful about, and giving judgment instantaneously and unmistakably in a voice so low it may easily be stifled, but also so clear that it is impossible to misunderstand it."

"I remember now that I heard Ian Macrae once say that when conscience speaks then the soul is before the tribunal of its own divinity; and that for one brief moment the warning or directing voice is heard."

"That is the thought, and a right noble one," answered the provost. "I wish that we could all live to it, even as Ian Macrae does. For I am sure that he constantly and habitually allows his higher inner self to whisper to his lower mortal self in that divine voice we call conscience. Moment by moment it prompts him to good deeds, fills his heart with a divine compassion, and makes

all his aspirations pure, wise, and above all, unselfish."

"We could not do it, Robert. Macrae is a man by himself."

"We ought to try and do it, Marian; it is the very task set every human soul, for it is only by living constantly with our higher self, and yielding a loving, willing obedience to its commands, that our struggling, sinning, suffering human personality becomes one with its divine author and so at last wins its immortality."

"I am thinking, Robert, that Dr. Micklehose would be holding a kirk session over you if he heard the words you were just saying."

"He would do nothing of the kind, Marian. Many a thought comes into a good man's heart and head he does not cry aloud in the pulpit. The doctor and I have had many spiritual confidences—there isn't any great gulf between us—a good man's religion goes far deeper, and higher, and wider than his creed."

"Robert! whatever are you talking about?"

"I am only saying that creeds are good schoolmasters; and all of us need to go to school at the beginning of life; but sooner or later, if this world has not silenced the divine man within us, we begin to think out and to work out with fear and trembling, but yet with heavenly hope, what the

apostle calls 'our own salvation.' It is a great thing, Marian, to ask with the jailer, 'What shall I do to be saved?' but it is a far grander thing to ask with Paul, 'Lord, what wilt *thou have me to do?*' "

CHAPTER XII.

ALAN AND FLORA.

IN a short time the Mackenzies followed Ian Macrae to Morandaroch. Their sail was a very pleasant one, but all were compelled to compare it with that of the past year. Then Jessie and Alan had been with them; now Jessie was married and Alan far off in the heat and hubbub of London. The provost did his best to supply Alan's place, but one personality can never quite stand for another; and Flora missed Alan continually. She missed him more at fair Dunbrack. It was all well to send for architects and be collecting granite and building materials, and to plan and talk over the enlargement and beautifying of the dear old place, but Flora knew that nothing would be positively decided on until Alan had expressed his wishes and his opinions.

She had always felt a strong attachment to Dunbrack, even when there as a visitor; now that it was her very own, her home, as it had been the

home of her kindred, a great love for the gray old dwelling, with its martial courtyard and its shadowy garden, took possession of her. She had a constant sense of companionship in its rooms, and this sense was sometimes so strong that she felt the very presence of the pictured chiefs and women that had lived in them before her. In some occult way, also, her mind was impressed by them. Often she decided on the changes for a certain room, and then felt that her intentions could not be carried out. There was no sympathy with them from those beyond. Nevertheless, talk and speculation regarding what was to be done passed pleasantly many a wet day and many a quiet evening.

The provost lingered at Dunbrack far beyond his intention. He could not leave his friend Ian, whose soul—that strange, fluttering, restless essence—was ready to depart. It was the falling of a withered leaf whether he lived or died from day to day—last days suffused with a serene and sacred glow. And yet withal a little anxious—as those going a long journey may be—he sat in the door of his home, waiting for the King's messenger. It was now that the provost noticed many traits in his friend that had not struck him before, and one of these was his extreme urbanity and respect for the poorest and most ignorant of the men and women with whom he came in con-

tact. It was so remarkable that Mackenzie could not help speaking of it to him, and Ian lifted his face, and the fiery flash in his eyes gave to the words he said a still graver import:

"Robert! my friend Robert, the poorest fisherman that goes out in his boat to sea is having a majestic antiquity that we must respect. If you will only be thinking of it, how wonderful it is! For far off in the eternal mind of God that poor man had his place from everlasting. Before the world was he lay there with God's goodness round about him, the object of a transcending, unfathomable love. Yes, indeed! so long as there has been a God, so long has that man's soul been the object of God's knowledge and care. It will be no wonder, then, that God is so patient with sinning souls; no wonder that He thought them worthy of the incarnation of His only begotten son Jesus Christ."

"You make the love of God a very near thing, Ian."

"I am not making it more than it is, Robert. Nearer to God are we than to our father and mother. He besets us, guards us behind and before; and we can never get away from the home of His right hand."

"Yet how constantly we disobey and grieve Him!"

"There will be one thing that grieves Him most of all—it is when we deliberately look His commandments in the face, and then break them. Ah, that is a great sin against a great love! Think of it, Robert! He is bidding His angels rejoice, not because He has made a new world, but because one sinful man or woman has come repenting to His loving heart to be forgiven. Oh, the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of such divine, abounding love!"

"If we are partakers of this divine love, Ian, it must surely show itself in our lives, but how shall we know it?"

"Always we can be knowing it by one thing, Robert—the overflowing of ourselves upon others. This is the divine side of love, not what we are doing for ourselves, but what we are doing for others."

"Ah, Ian, but when a man is in the world, and doing the business of the world, how can he take counsel of the eternal? Business, science, and many other things must claim his care and attention."

"Well, then, Robert, there is no human occupation that is not awful and sacred when you think of it in its relation to what is to be hereafter. You are day by day sowing in this incarnation what you will be reaping in your next one. So, then,

whatever your business or your occupation, it is the work given you to do, your task in the days of your vanity. Whether it be ruling a city, or planting a field, or casting the net and the line, or serving an unjust master, it is your task, your discipline, and can be wrought in such a way as to gain our good Master's 'well done,' and also His distinct advancement from the use of one talent to three—to five—to ten talents—for you will be noticing that the promotion as taught in Jesus Christ's parable is according to what we do with the talents—that is, with the opportunities—given us."

"But a man must take pleasure in his work, give his mind to it, how else could he do it properly?"

"Yes, indeed! Diligent in business, rejoicing in his works—if they be lawful and good works—that is the command; but you will be doing no work the worse for remembering that the smallest thing you do has an eternal significance. If you do what is right, you will know it; if you do wrong, the unfallen angel within you will not fail to bear witness of your sin; and if you will be listening to that voice it is not far out of the right road you will be going, Robert."

It was a strange thing to go at this time into the lonely dwelling of Macrae, and see and feel how the departure of one soul had affected it.

When Fame dwelt there, her very presence had thrown a glamour over the worn furniture, and faded hangings, and dim pictures. No one noticed them as shabby; they seemed a very fitting background for the girl's bright beauty and vivacity; but the pale, grave man in their midst lent them nothing by contrast, and their dull, outworn look was pathetically in keeping with his perilously delicate, almost luminous face, and the frail, lucid body, which looked, indeed, as if it had already been clothed with that spiritual body of which we have such blessed revelation. No one now thought of material surroundings in Ian Macrae's presence; for this world lay at his feet like a cast-off sandal.

Coming from his house one evening, the provost met Peter McDuff. There had been nothing on Mackenzie's part that might interrupt the courtesy which their business relations had necessitated; and Mackenzie was, moreover, under the spell of Macrae's teaching; he offered his hand frankly, and Peter was too wise to refuse it.

"How is our friend?" he asked. "I am hearing from more than one that he is not long for this world. It will be hard for him to leave it just as soon as he had got out of the trouble and the care of it."

"He does not feel it hard," answered Mackenzie; "to die is gain for Macrae."

"Just so! But when a man has married his daughter and paid his debts he sits easy. Well, well, he was a weakly creature these past years, though strong and masterful enough in his young days. How is the new Lady of Dunbrack? We were hearing this and that of her great fortune. It is a lying world, and perhaps nothing to it."

"Only one hundred thousand pounds to it, and the most of that in securities bound to double themselves," answered the provost a little proudly. "Miss Dunbrack is a very great heiress."

"And all of it will be out of the brain of Angus Dunbrack! He was a clever laddie when he was at school. He could best any of us, even in them days."

"Yet he thought you bested him about Dunbrack."

"I am knowing it. He was a suspicious creature. A man has to be careful if he would make money. This is a hard world, and very few manage to get their own share of the land, and the gold, and the honor of it. You'll be giving my compliments to the young lady. My son Shaw will be rejoicing with her. He has been in Edinburgh. It was only last night he got home, and it was he that was bringing the news with him. I was doubting it myself, but am glad to

hear it is true. And she will be building, I see, and making improvements. Just so! That is the way, Mackenzie. The fathers gather the gold and the children scatter it. Just so! But thanks to the Best! I have a son that is no spender."

"Good-morning, sir," replied Mackenzie, and the uncomfortable meeting was over.

McDuff had kept his temper through it, and he congratulated himself on the circumstance; but he showed no such self-control when he entered the parlor of his home and found Shaw sitting there, reading a novel.

"You're a braw, braw lad," he cried contemptuously, "to be letting two rich lasses slip through your fingers. I'm sick and ashamed of you! Do now what you say, and take up with the law; the women are over many for you. Here is that girl of Angus Dunbrack's with one, yes two, hundred thousand pounds in her hand, and you couldn't win the hand with such a fee in it! And there was Fame Macrae, that you let Grant steal away from you! Read your novels. If you can't make love, you can read how other men were making it. I'm fairly ashamed of you!"

"Keep your temper, father. It is neither wise nor healthy for a man as old as you are to be giving way to passion; you will be having a fever, and then doctor's bills, and what not."

"One hundred thousand pounds—growing to two hundred thousand."

"I am not believing a word of it."

"You were seeing it yourself in the Edinburgh papers."

"Newspapers lie."

"Mackenzie himself was telling me the same thing, and that not twenty minutes ago."

"Very clever in Mackenzie to keep such news to himself and his son. Remember that it was you that made inquiries, and were told that Miss Dunbrack had three hundred a year. Blame yourself. Indeed, I may well blame you, for I could have loved that girl without a penny piece; and there was a time when I could have won her. Blame yourself, father. As for that young scoundrel Alan—"

"Mind what you are saying, Shaw. There are words that will be costing more than you can afford—sc—— and the rest of the letters is an actionable word."

"Alan Mackenzie is a—"

"Sc——! Say so. But what will you be making by saying it? And what will you be losing? Robert Mackenzie has the fight in him, and I am not doubting but that he will handle the law as cleverly as his father did the dirk."

"Is the young cub here?"

"I am not knowing. Hamish will find that out for you."

"He need not. I shall go back to Edinburgh. There is a good card in my hand, but I must play it in Edinburgh."

"A good card! What is it, Shaw?"

"I shall not tell you just yet what it is. Secrecy is the mother of success."

"A good card! A ten of diamonds, Shaw?"

"Say a queen."

"Good boy! Good boy! Any man of sense will be telling you that it is as easy to love a rich woman as a poor one. I was sorely left to myself one summer day, and I married for beauty—I have been rueing it ever since."

"Sir, my mother was a lady."

"Right, Shaw, she was. And she has gone to a better world. And if you have a good card in Edinburgh, go there and play it."

"I am going. Say to any one asking after me I have gone on business of my own. I shall not stop in Morandaroch to have that young sc—Mackenzie pass me with his dropped eyes and air of contempt—and the heiress he has played for on his arm. I hope Shaw McDuff knows enough to leave a field he has lost."

A few days after this conversation the provost received a letter which appeared to give him some anxiety. "I ought to go to Glasgow to-night,

Marian," he said, "there is some business I should look after myself."

"Is Alan in it?"

"Alan has nothing to do with it."

"Well, then, provost, you be to stay right here. I am not going to be left—Flora and me—two lone women, and not a man on the place, if robbers should come, as it is likely they would. There is no business more important than myself and Flora. We just can't and won't be left, and that is the sum total of the matter."

"What do you say, Flora?" asked the provost, turning to the lovely woman standing at the open window. And then Flora said a few very unexpected words:

"I say, father, that we could be left easily and safely if you would send for Alan to take your place."

"That is it!" cried Mrs. Mackenzie. "That is just it! Send for Alan in your place, Robert, and we can be left well enough. Flora, you are a wise young woman. If you were a man, I would say you were a very Daniel. Now, provost, you have got your ultimatum."

"I said I would *not* send for Alan till the year's end. He has just finished as fine a piece of business in our Turkish trade as any man in London could have accomplished. Can't you let him alone

when he is doing well? You are never satisfied. I hope I may be allowed to keep my word; my word is of some consequence to me."

"Your word and the Turkish trade is not every good thing in life, Robert. We just cannot and will not be left in this sequestered-like place; it wouldn't be kind or right. It would be a thing to make a story of. I will never submit to it."

"You see, father," continued Flora, "there is an idea that my fortune is in gold pieces, and that there are boxes and boxes of them hid in the castle. And really I am at my wit's end about my letters. Last Saturday I had to write from morning to night, so that I might not break the Sabbath Day; and the tables are full of designs and estimates, and how can I decide on any course until Alan comes? It would be an insult to him. If I should do so, he is just the man to bid me 'good-by,' and I would not respect him, if he did not. We ought to have things settled as soon as possible. I want the work begun, and so does mother; don't you, dear?"

"Of course I do. Any one in their five senses would want it begun."

"And we cannot begin without Alan, can we, mother?"

"Nobody with any heart in their bosom would think of such a thing."

"And Alan ought to be written for at once?"

"This very hour."

"You see, father, what it comes to. If we talk until to-morrow it will not come to anything different. Dear father," kissing him, "won't you write for Alan?"

"My dear lassie, I will not writ for Alan, but I cannot hinder you from writing any letter you like."

"I said I would not write. Is not my word as important as yours?"

"No—o, I think it is not. A woman is allowed by use and custom certain privileges in matters of love and marriage, and to say no for yes, and yes for no, and I won't for I will, and I will for I won't, is one of them. Your mother has practised this kind of logic on me ever since I knew her. I never take her to task for it," and rising with these words and kissing his wife, he went quickly out of the room, and so put an end to the argument.

"You will write, Flora?"

"I will think about it, mother."

"Listen to your heart, Flora, and think of the poor lad in the heat, and fogs, and noise, and sickness, and work, and worry of London in this weather; and the grouse ready to eat, and the heather in bloom, and the red deer lying upon the mountains. I could not help crying this very

morning when I went through the hall and saw his shooting cap hanging on the rack and his riding whip lying so naturally across it. And there's his dog, too. Whenever I see the creature he is looking at me with the same question in his eyes, 'When is he coming home?' Oh, Flora, you be to write, my dear. If you love me, you be to write to Alan and bring him home."

The end of such loving, eager pleading may be easily divined. It came even sooner than either Flora or Mrs. Mackenzie had thought possible; for after a careful consideration of all circumstances, they came to the conclusion that it must be Monday night before he could reach Dunbrack, even if all events worked together for that end. So they set their heart on Monday, and the good news was spread through the house and the village, and even the dog in his lonely kennel heard it, and, perhaps, better than any one understood the precise time of Alan's home-coming. For on Sabbath morning he was so loud and insistent that the provost ordered him to be set free. "He is sick," he said, "and if loosed will go to the hills and find the medicine he wants."

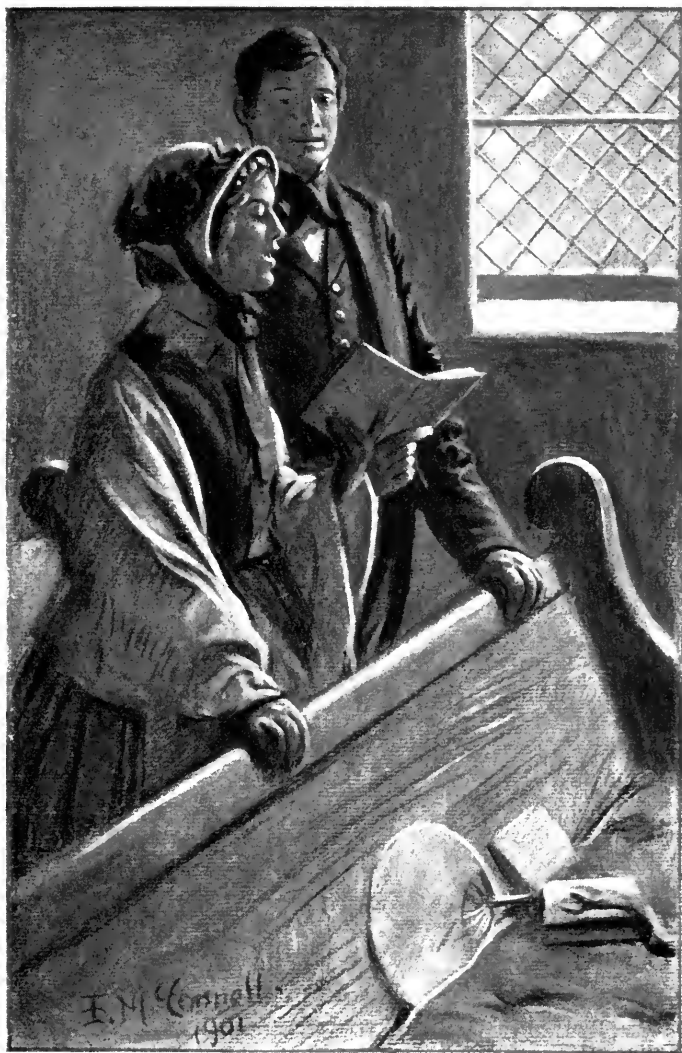
But he did not go to the hills, for as the family were driving to church they met him on the way. He was told to go back home, but he only went behind the carriage; and very soon his loud bark

of joy and his frantic bound forward revealed what he was waiting on the road for. Alan was there, and in another moment the happy man was in the carriage, and the equally happy women were looking into his handsome face and clasping his hands.

"I am neither hungry nor thirsty nor dusty, mother," he said, when she proposed to return home with him, "and I want to go to kirk. It is just the place I want to go."

This meeting, controlled by the reticences of the Scotch Sabbath and the Scotch character, was not by any means a demonstrative one; but the speech is so little, and the eyes are so eloquent, and the clasp of the hand is so eloquent, that in a moment or two, without any spoken words, all was understood and all forgiven. He went into the kirk at Flora's side, they sang from the same psalm book, they knelt clasping each other's hand, and in that sweetly solemn communion renewed with tenderest thoughts the vows that the moon and the silver brook had witnessed more than a year before.

Dunbrack was now the home of the purest and highest happiness, and the provost could not leave it. He sent the very thought of business packing. There was too much joy to run away from, and he counted not the cost of staying. Besides, he really



"THEY SANG FROM THE SAME PSALM BOOK,"

thought himself necessary to his two dear children at this time. In the glory of their renewed love they had such extravagant views of life, they would have built a palace in those wild hills. Their ideas of home were so splendid, their purposes so wide, their hopes and plans for the future so glorified by love as to be quite prodigal and even impracticable. But it was all the purest delight, and the provost and his wife lived over the joy of their own love-making in the gladness of their son's most fortunate espousals.

After two weeks of charming planning and consultations the provost resolved to return to Glasgow, but was detained at the last moment by a message from Macrae. He never hesitated, but went straight to his friend. He found him at the very gate of heaven, smiling, serene, full of radiant hope; his voice sweet and hollow, like muffled music from some mysterious distance; and on his face

"the look of one
To whom glad news is sent
From the far country of his home
After long banishment."

Lying there on the border of being, where life hardly draws breath, he clasped Mackenzie's hand and said, "Stay with me now, Robert!" and oh,

the clinging, tremulous gentleness in the pleading words!

"Unto death, dear Ian, I am here."

"Men do not die. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."*

"You are content to go, Ian?"

"I am like the pilgrim, 'I feel the bottom, and it is good.' I am only returning the divine part of me to the Divine who gave it."

"And then?"

"The sun that knows its setting will know its rise again. I am feeling already through this poor, perishing flesh shoots of my immortality."

"And you have no fear?"

"Fear is lost in faith. I die that I may be born. If I did not know that I should be a most forlorn pilgrim. I was once reading of a great viking who asked a wise man, 'What is life?' And the wise man answered, 'It is like a bird that flies out

*Apart from Macrae's invincible faith in immortality, it is to be noted that Highlanders never speak of the departed as "dead." Dr. Stewart says, in his "West Highlands," that he gave great offence by asking the daughter of a friend, "When did your father die?" "Brutes alone," she answered angrily, "die, and when they die are *dead*. Human beings do not die, and are not to be spoken of as *dead*. They depart, they go, they change, they sleep, if you like, but they don't *die* and can never be spoken of as *dead*." The phraseology in which the death of human beings, as distinct from brutes, as expressed in Gaelic, invariably implies continued existence.

of the dark through a hall full of light, out into the darkness again.' Oh, no! We are, indeed, souls of passage, but we know whence we come and where we are going. It is not out of the dark and into the dark. We come from God, who is our home; He guides us through the lighted hall of life, and brings us safely back to Himself. They who have loved the Father of their spirits in life will be finding no difficulty in going to Him when life is over. But not alone shall I go; there are friends waiting for me; they will see that I do not tarry or tremble through boundless space and countless constellations." These words, spoken with long intervals and ever-increasing weakness, were very near the last. Just before dawn he cried with a strange, glad strength, "I am going now—I have long been eager for rest." A solemn pallor spread over his face, a dying breath fluttered through the room, and Ian was gone—gone away farther than human thought could follow him. A sudden feeling of alienation, a sense of incalculable distance was now between them, and Mackenzie was keenly sensitive to it; but he waited until the great silence and the unchanging outline beneath the coverlet told him visibly the truth of their separation.

The sun was then shining brightly, the ocean breaking solemnly almost at the threshold; there were some fishermen just putting out to sea, and

there was a faint sound of rowers striking the waves in harmony; but around and above all a sense of noble repose that was not of this world. Walking thoughtfully through the village, he met Shaw McDuff driving in a very splendid carriage with a handsome, middle-aged woman. Then he remembered that Peter had been boasting round the countryside that "his son Shaw was going to marry a widow lady whose money could not be counted by the ordinar tables of addition; moreover, a lady of the noble family of Farquarson." And though Mackenzie's heart was beating to the most tender and solemn thoughts, he looked at the lady and at the haughty young man reclining at her side, and knew that, for once, Peter's boasting had truth in it. And this strange meeting of death and life moved him very much, and he was thinking of it and of two lines of Milton's, which Macrae had once quoted to him on some such occasion:

"What if earth be but the shadow of heaven and things
therein,
Each to the other like more than on earth is thought?"

when he met Alan coming down the mountain.

"He is gone, father?"

"Yes."

"At what time?"

"I do not know. He was here, and when I looked again his soul had flitted away. Good men dying whisper to their souls to go, and they vanish from bodies unseen. Macrae has now 'tasted of the powers of the world to come.' "

"I had a long talk with him two days ago, but I wish now that I had called yesterday."

"You had a long talk? What did he say to you?"

"He spoke of the happiness that had come into my life, and asked me what I was going to do with it? Then I told him all Flora's and my own plans for the good of the people around us, and he asked again, 'But for yourself, what?' And I said I was going to read the classics carefully and study chemistry, because I had a great wish to find out some of its secrets. And he answered me strangely."

"How did he answer you?"

"He told me to remember that my higher self was 'clothed in a coat of skin,' and 'crucified in the bonds of the flesh,' and that the most brilliant intellectuality would not remove me from the animal plane to the safety of spiritual existence. He told me that the personal ego depended on the higher for its promise of eternal life. He told me I must develop spiritually as well as mentally, and so illumine this daily life with unselfish deeds that

it would remain throughout eternal years a pleasant memory to my higher self.”*

“That is all logical, Alan; for animal causes cannot be followed by spiritual effects—the stream cannot rise higher than its source. What else, Alan?”

“He told me that my higher self overshadowed my personal self, and continually struggled to penetrate and illumine its darkness, and that, therefore, it was my first and greatest duty to help in this birth and growth of spiritual life by yielding a willing and loving obedience and by treasuring every glimmering ray of divine light, even though it took the form of pain or rebuke. He told me to do this with confidence and hope, because no effort is lost; and that soul force, like other forms of force, is always conserved. And there was one thing he said to me as I bade him farewell that I shall never forget—‘Remember, Alan, that this soul, this higher self of yours, is like a white bird in your breast. You must carry it through a sin-

*This thought has been thus well expressed by a late poet:

“If thou art base and earthly, then despair;
Thou art but mortal as the brute that falls.
Birds weave their nests, the lion finds a lair,
Man builds his halls—
These are but coverts from earth’s war and storm,
Homes where our lesser lives take shape and breath;
But if no heavenly man has grown—what form
Clothes thee at death?”

ful, crowded, impure world; oh, take care of the bird in your breast! When the time of your departure comes, let it go free with unsullied wings.' ”

They were now approaching Dunbrack, and both father and son looked at the gray pile and the vast amount of material prepared for its renovation. The father put his hand on his son's shoulder and stayed his steps. “Alan,” he said, “you are a very happy man, fortunate and happy.”

“I am, father. I feel it.”

“When are you to be married?”

“Flora has fixed on some day about Christmas time.”

“Then you will be married in Glasgow?”

“Yes, sir; in Glasgow.”

“I am glad of it. Your mother was so much disappointed about the simplicity of Jessie's marriage.”

“Mother is to have all her way about our marriage. She and Flora have arranged all to please themselves, and I surely think the invitations will fill the old Ram's Horn Kirk. Of course, James is to assist Dr. Micklehose. Mother is determined to have a ceremony worthy of the bride and her great fortune—and also of you and of your honorable position, dear father.”

“She is right, Alan. I am with mother in her

desire. You have every cause to be proud and happy in your bride—and you love her, Alan?”

“More than I can say, sir. I loved her when I first saw her. I shall love her forever.”

“It is a soul love, then, and you two are one.”

“We two together shall wear through the ages, Flora and I. I look for no long parting even by death. We two, Flora and I, we shall wear through the ages together.”

A LITTLE SEQUEL.

THESE events happening so far away and so long ago were strangely brought to the remembrance of some still living who had knowledge of them by two newspaper paragraphs which appeared almost at the same date in the year A.D. 1899. The first was a biographical notice of the death of Shaw McDuff, M.P. for Hotham. It referred briefly to his birth at Morandaroeh, his creditable passage through the University of Glasgow, and his marriage to the widow of a well-known wealthy banker. And after enumerating the various political and social clubs of which he was a member, the many companies to which he gave his name and direction, the charities he patronized, his dwellings in Surrey and London, and his fine modern castle at Morandaroeh, and his notable amount of public spirit, it concluded thus:

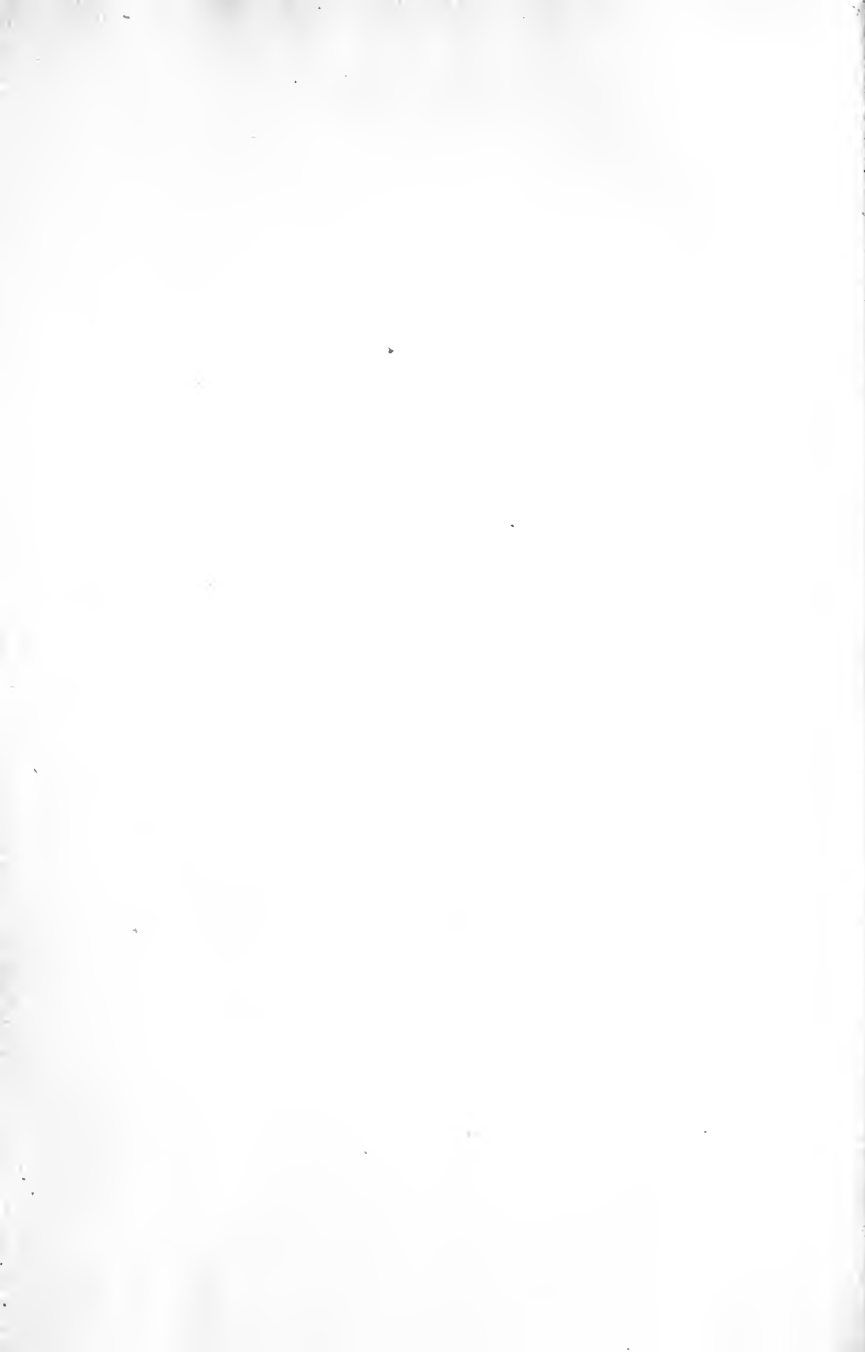
“Mr. McDuff was in the House on Monday, where, as a prominent member of the Opposition, he assailed with his usual virulence the member for Middleboro, Mr. Alan Mackenzie, who re-

ceived the attack with the serene imperturbability which is customary with that gentleman. After his philippic, Mr. McDuff visited the Reform Club, dined with a number of his party, and subsequently made what his friends consider one of the finest of his speeches against the government. It was his last speech. He had a stroke during the night, and did not rally from it. Mrs. McDuff died some years ago, but he leaves two sons to inherit his great wealth—Captain Alexander McDuff of the Gordon Highlanders and Walter McDuff, Q.C., a well-known member of the Scottish Bar.”

It was easy for the initiated to read between these lines the comfortable, respectable fortune of Shaw McDuff; and while the thoughts evoked were yet fresh in memory, another notice in a London society paper almost completed the story of the lives with which McDuff had been associated. It related in somewhat glowing colors, as if the relation was personal and pleasant, the marriage of the Honorable Sara Dunbrack Allison to Cecil, Earl of Loudan. This account said the marriage took place at Dunbrack Castle, and the ceremony was performed by the venerable Dr. James Laidlaw, of Glasgow; the bride, whose parents were dead, being given away by her grandfather, Alan Mackenzie, M.P. Following this statement was a long list of noble guests, with

whom this story has nothing to do; but in this list there were three names that stood out with the light of other days on them—*Lady Euphamia Grant*, an old friend of the family; *Mrs. James Laidlaw*, the great-aunt of the bride, and *Mrs. Alan Mackenzie*, her grandmother.

So, then, after fifty years Alan and Flora were still *souls of passage*, winging their flight together to the very verge and shoal of life. Had they kept the white bird in their breasts unsullied as they passed through the city and the wilderness? If so, then surely Alan's prophecy will be faithful and true, and *they two shall wear through the ages together*.



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

41584

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 001 374 590 6

